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# **The Partition of Bengal**

## **(1905-1911)**

*Edited by*

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*To my  
grand father  
Late Babu Narain Prasad Saxena*



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The Proceedings and the Resolutions of Indian National Congress of the relevant years, Congress Presidential Addresses, published by G.A. Natesan and Co. Madras, (1934) the Addresses, Reprint of all the Congress Resolutions etc., published from Madras, no date., The Congress Cyclopaedia, The Indian National Congress, (1885-1920) Vol. I by K. Iswara Dutta, Delhi, 1967, at Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi.

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I have drawn heavily on the above sources, and for any omission, I crave for the indulgence of the authors and publishers of such works.

## Preface

The decision to partition Bengal into two provinces, which was announced on 7th July, 1905, was one of the most unpopular steps taken by the government of Lord Curzon (1898-1905). The decision itself was made, maintained the Viceroy, primarily for administrative reasons, though the Bengalis looked upon it as a political measure aimed at the growing solidarity of the Bengali speaking people. Lord Curzon had found "that the administration of Bengal was becoming more and more onerous and this burden was too much for the Lt. Governor to bear". The task of the Government of Bengal was beyond its strength. The Lt. Governor of Bengal had to administer an area of 189,000 square miles with a population of 78,000,000 people. No other provincial governor in India had so huge a charge. The result was that many districts in Eastern Bengal had been practically neglected and the law and order situation in the eastern part of the province was very miserable. There were a variety of crimes ranging from murder to dacoity, from petty thefts to pilferage. The hand of law and order could not reach the culprits. This was too much for the Viceroy, who sought nothing but efficiency in his administration, to bear. He partitioned the province into two. The new province of East Bengal included Assam, the three great Bengal divisions of Chittagong, Dacca and Rajasahi, and a few other minor pieces of territory. The new provinces thus constituted had an area of 106,540 square miles and a population of 31 millions. The Muslims were in majority in this province. There were 18 million Muslims and 12 million Hindus. The capital of this province was Dacca.

The partition of Bengal was a blunder. It injured the feelings and the sentiments of one of the most emotional people in the world. There was a fierce agitation in the country against this measure (1905-1911). The Bengalis managed to win the sympathies of the whole of the country on their side, and the British Government had ultimately to revise its decision in 1911 but could not escape from its consequences. The partition of Bengal in 1905 marks a turning point in the history of Indian nationalism. The Indian National Congress was now brought into the centre of the stage, and new concepts came to be formulated, such as Swaraj or self-rule and Swadeshi, or the use of home produced goods. The invocation to goddess Kali, Bande Mataram or "Hail to the Mother" now acquired a new significance and came to be used as the political war-cry of Indian nationalism. It was really out of the travails of Bengal that Indian nationalism was born. It was again out of the partition of Bengal and the agitation against it that "Muslim nationalism" was also born.

The present Volume consists of two parts. Part I discusses all about the partition, its genesis, the rationale behind it, the agitation, the Boycott, and Swadeshi movements, the attitude of the two major political parties, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, to the partition and the reaction of the Indian people and Press to it. Part II consists of Select documents on the partition.

The Bengal partition gave a new thrust to Indian Nationalism, which developed new characteristics. Before 1905, said Gandhi, the people of India would run inside their homes on seeing a white face, but after 1905 they came out in the streets to face the Englishman. Thus from the partition the Indian National Congress, the principal vehicle of the nationalist movement in India, acquired a new strength, its mass-orientation and multi-dimensional character.

In the end it is my bounden duty to acknowledge the help and assistance that I have received from the various Libraries in compiling the book, the important among them

being The National Archives of India, New Delhi; The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; The Sapru House Library, New Delhi; The JNU Library, New Delhi, and the Delhi University Library, Delhi. I have also consulted all standard works on the subject and I would very sincerely regret, if through inadvertence, any matter has been used in this book without due acknowledgement, for which I wish to offer my most sincere apologies should such an omission be found.

31st May, 1987  
C-6/9, Vasant Vihar,  
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Vinod Kumar Saxena



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## The Partition of Bengal

The year 1905 is one of the most eventful years in the history of Bengal. It would be no exaggeration to say that it was an epoch-making year, which left a profound impact on the political history of the country. It was the year in which Bengal was divided into two separate provinces. The new province consisted of Assam, the three great Bengal divisions of Chittagong, Dacca and Rajasahi and a few minor pockets. It was to be a Muslim majority province with 18 million Muslims and 12 million Hindus. The capital of this new province was to be Dacca.

### Genesis of the Partition of Bengal :

The origins of the Partition of Bengal are to be found in Sir Strafford Northcote's Minute of 18th January, 1868, in which Northcote pointed out that the province of Bengal was so big that the outlying portions of the province suffered due to lack of attention in times of emergency. He referred to the Orissa famine of 1866 as furnishing evidence of the defects of the existing system of government when exposed to the ordeal of a serious emergency.<sup>1</sup> He suggested that Assam and possibly Orissa be separated from Bengal proper.

1. Home Department (Public Branch) Despatch No. 10, dated 16th January, 1868.

## 2     *The Partition of Bengal 1905-11*

In 1874, Assam, Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara were separated from Bengal. The Bengalis accepted this transfer of the Bengali-speaking districts without demur because “public opinion was not then much of a power, and the solidarity of the Bengalee-speaking people and their growing sense of unity had not become so pronounced a factor in the public life of the province.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1896, the Chief Commissioner of Assam Sir W. Ward, put forward a scheme for the separation of Chittagong Division from Bengal, but his successor Sir Henry Cotton opposed the scheme in 1897 and described it as “inadvisable and impracticable.”<sup>3</sup>

It was, however, during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon that the question of the large size of the province was once again taken up. In June, 1903, Lord Curzon prepared an exhaustive Minute on the territorial redistribution in India. Part II of that Minute dealt with Bengal. On the basis of the Minute H.H. Risley, Secretary to the Government of India, addressed letters to the Governments of Bengal, Madras, the Central Provinces and Assam containing proposals for the reduced territorial jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and affecting changes in the territories of other provinces to whose governments also the letter was addressed.<sup>4</sup>

### **Rationale Behind the Partition of Bengal :**

-The Government said that the Partition of Bengal into two provinces was purely an administrative measure. It had three aims in dividing the province. Firstly, it wanted to relieve the Government of Bengal of a part of the burden imposed

2. Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation In Making*, (Oxford, 1963) p. 170.
3. Sir Henry Cotton said: “I expressed my views on the subject officially in January 1897, and the matter was then dropped, to be revived—as I well knew it would be—after I had left, India.” P. Mukerjee, *All About Partition*, (Calcutta, 1905) p. 29.
4. Home Public letter No. 3678 dated Calcutta 3rd December, 1903.

upon it and at the same time it wanted to make provision for more efficient administration of the outlying districts of the province; Secondly, the Government wanted to promote the development of Assam by enlarging its jurisdiction so as to give it an outlet to the sea; and Thirdly, the Government wanted to unite under a single administration the scattered sections of the Oriya-speaking population.<sup>5</sup> It was further proposed to detach Chittagong and the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh from Bengal and add them to Assam. Similarly, Chota Nagpur was also to be cut off from Bengal and to be incorporated with the Central Provinces. The Government's proposals were officially published in January, 1904.

#### **Justification of the Partition :**

In February, 1904, Lord Curzon made an official tour of the districts of eastern Bengal "ostensibly with the object of ascertaining public opinion, but really to over-awe it."<sup>6</sup> The Viceroy addressed public meetings at Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensingh. The meetings that he addressed were specially convened for the purpose and his audiences were mostly Mohammedans. He explained to them "that his object in partitioning Bengal was not only to relieve the Bengal administration, but also to create a Mohammedan province where Islam would be predominant and its followers in the ascendancy and that with this view he had decided to include the two remaining districts of the Dacca division in his scheme."<sup>7</sup> But the "trend of feeling was sufficiently manifested by the swarms of small boys in the streets carrying placards on which was inscribed the legend, "Do not turn us into Assamese."<sup>8</sup> The walls of Dacca streets were placarded with mottos containing the words: "Pray do not sever Bengalis", "Do not divide us", "Do not flout history and nationality." The Viceroy's speeches were mostly conciliatory and explanatory in character. He told the people of Dacca that he never entertained the intention ascribed to

5. *Ibid.*

6. Surendranath Banerjea, p. 172.

7. A.C. Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution, (Madras, 1917) p. 207.

8. Lovat Fraser, India Under Curzon and After, (New Delhi, nd) p. 381

#### 4     *The Partition of Bengal 1905-11*

him by the placards.<sup>9</sup> But before he had been very long in Eastern Bengal, Curzon had "realised that the scheme in the form it had then assumed would be unacceptable."<sup>10</sup> However, the truth about Curzon is that there never was any real desire in him "to defer to public opinion and abide by its decision."<sup>11</sup> He carried out his scheme in spite of the public opposition.

To begin with, the Partition of Bengal was unpalatable to all sections of the Bengalis. "We felt that we have been insulted, humiliated and tricked. We felt that the whole of our future was at a stake, and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengali-speaking population."<sup>12</sup>

The Muslims for whom a province was sought to created by the Viceroy were opposed to the measure. Nevinson writes, "I was in haste, because I had an appointment with the Nawab Salimulla of Dacca, certainly the most influential in the city, and perhaps in the province. For the population of Eastern Bengal, though nearly all Bengali, is about three-fifths Mohammedans, and, owing to his father's wealth, wisdom and public munificence, the Nawab is regarded by the Mohammedans as their natural leader . . . when the Partition was first suggested, he was as much opposed to it as any Bengali could be, and I was told that, in his simple hearted way, he described it as 'beastly'.<sup>13</sup>

The 'Muslim Chronicle', an important Muslim paper of Calcutta in its editorial dated 9th January, 1904 said: "We do not recollect that there has, in the discussion of public questions ever before so much unanimity of voice as that which is raising its shouts of protests against the proposed partition of Bengal."<sup>14</sup> The Central Mohammedan Association of Calcutta

9. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

11. Surendranath Banerjea, p. 172.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

13. Henry W. Nevinson, *The New Spirit in India*, (London, 1908) pp. 190-191.

14. 'Muslim Chronicle', (Calcutta 9th January, 1904).

condemned the proposed partition of Bengal at a meeting held in February, 1904. Most of the speakers at the said meeting were very important Muslim leaders of the time. They were Mir Motahar Hussain, Zamindar of Barisal; Seraj-ul-Islam Chaudhary of Chittagong, member Bengal Legislative Council; and Abdul Hamid, Editor of the 'Muslim Chronicle'. Views of the Central Mohammedan Association, thus expressed, were forwarded to the Government through its Honorary Secretary Syed Amir Husani.<sup>15</sup>

Besides Muslims, a large section of Anglo-Indian press, such as the 'Statesman', 'The Englishman' and 'The Times of India' and which were recognised as semi-official organs also condemned the proposal. Even some important papers of England like 'The Times', 'Manchester Guardian' and 'The Daily News', also condemned the measure.<sup>16</sup> "It is indeed difficult to conceive", says R. C. Majumdar, "of a more unanimous and persistent opposition to a Government measure; there is certainly no precedent in the previous history of British rule in India."<sup>17</sup>

#### **Agitation against the Partition :**

The Bengalis resisted the partition of their province with all the vehemence at their command. They did not accept the Government's contention that the partition of the province was an administrative measure and that the Government had no ulterior motive in it. They felt that it was a deliberate attempt on the part of the British Government to drive a wedge at the growing solidarity of the Bengali-speaking people and to create

15. B.L. Grover, *A Documentary Study of British Policy towards Indian Nationalism (1885-1909)* (Delhi, 1967) p. 56.

The Secretary Central Mohammedan Association of Calcutta, Nawab Ameer Husaini observed: "My Committee are of opinion that no portion of the Bengali-speaking race should be separated from Bengal without the clearest necessity for such separation, and they think in the present case such necessity does not exist." A.C. Mazumdar, pp. 207-208.

16. P. Mukerjee, pp. 133-137.

17. R.C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom*, (Bombay, 1969) p. 26.

differences between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal. Banerjea says: "To have divided Bengal into two provinces, keeping the Bengali-speaking population together in one province and the rest in the other, would have removed all administrative inconveniences, whatever they were, and gratified public opinion. But this would not suit Lord Curzon and his Government. For, as we believe, there was an underlying motive, which would not be satisfied with such a division of the province..."<sup>18</sup> There appears to be truth in the Bengali point of view that Curzon was motivated by political considerations and not administrative in dividing Bengal. From his letters to the authorities in England, it is abundantly clear that the Viceroy wanted to undermine the solidarity of the politically advanced Bengalis and at lessening the political importance of Calcutta in Indian affairs. This is amply proved by his letter dated 17th February, 1904 to the Secretary of State for India in which the Viceroy said, "The Bengalis, who like to think of themselves a nation, and who dream of a future when the English will have been turned out and a Bengali Babu will be installed in Government House, Calcutta, of course bitterly resent any disruption that will be likely to interfere with the realisation of this dream. If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again; and you will be cementing and solidifying, on the eastern flanks of India, a force already formidable and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in future."<sup>19</sup> Regarding the importance of the city of Calcutta, Curzon wrote to the Secretary of State: "Calcutta is the centre from which the Congress party is manipulated throughout the whole of Bengal, and indeed the whole of India. Its best wirepullers and its most frothy orators all reside there. The perfection of their machinery, and the tyranny which it enables them to exercise, are truly remarkable. They dominate public opinion in Calcutta; they affect the High Court; they frighten the Local Government and they are sometimes not without serious influence upon the Government of India. The whole of their activity is directed

18. Surendranath Banerjea, p. 174.

19. Curzon's letter to the Secretary of State for India dated 17th Feb. 1904.

to creating an agency so powerful that they may one day be able to force a weak Government to give them what they desire.”<sup>20</sup>

To deprive Calcutta of its prime position as the Centre of political activity and to weaken the influence of the ‘Bengali Babus’, the Viceroy wanted to create new centres of activity. He rejected the Secretary of State’s plea for a Commissionership of Bihar, and opined that the proposal, if accepted, “would tend still further to consolidate the influence of Calcutta over the Bengali-speaking population.”<sup>21</sup>

The Viceroy also aimed at driving a wedge “between Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims.” The newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam would have a Muslim majority. During his tour of Eastern Bengal, he emphasised this aspect again and again in his speeches. Addressing a public meeting at Dacca, he traced the history of Dacca City and lamented its gradual decay and downfall. He said that his partition proposal would not only make Dacca the capital of a new province, but would also give the people of the area a preponderant voice in the administration of the province and “invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Musalman Viceroys and Kings.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, Curzon’s motives in dividing Bengal were two-fold: (1) to undermine the influence of the Bengalis and the city of Calcutta in national affairs; and (2) to undermine the growing solidarity of the Bengali-speaking people and to drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Musalmans.

The partition of Bengal was resisted by the public opinion not only in Bengal but all over the country.<sup>23</sup> The resistance

20. Curzon’s letter dated 2nd, February 1905 addressed to the Secretary of State for India. Also B.L. Grover p. 65.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Curzon’s Address at Dacca, 18th February, 1904, P. Mukerjee, p. 39.

23. M.A. Buch says: “The country was...driven to a desperate fight for its existence; and sentiment proved a more powerful force in

to the measure was more pronounced, vocal and aggressive in Bengal than elsewhere. The other provinces merely demonstrated their solidarity with their Bengali compatriots and opposed the measure at the public meetings and in the press.

The people of Bengal refused to accept partition as a 'settled fact'. The 'Bengalee', an important newspaper of the province edited by Surendranath Banerjea published on 7th July, 1905, a leading article under the caption : "A Grave National Disaster" which warned the Government of an impending national struggle of the greatest magnitude in case the Government did not reverse their decision.<sup>24</sup> B.C. Pal, an important Bengali leader of the time, said, "The whole country with one voice have protested against it, and have prayed that the mischief may be stayed. The protest has been in vain. That prayer has not been given any heed to."<sup>25</sup> He added "The partition was an evil measure, the partition was a hateful measure. The Bengalis hated to be divided from their own people, the Eastern province from the Western Province . . . We have been living together for how many centuries past nobody knows; we have developed a peculiar culture of our own through a common language and a common literature. Belonging though, no doubt, to the wide life of Indian Hindus and Indian Moslems, yet Bengal Hinduism has its own peculiarity, as the Moslem ideal and culture of Bengal have also their own peculiarity. Bengal has been for many centuries past a nation speaking one language, belonging to one civilisation, practically trying to develop one culture . . ."<sup>26</sup>

-The agitation against the partition of Bengal emanated from the city of Calcutta. There was a public meeting at the

(Continued from previous page)

rousing and uniting the people than the cogent reasonings of the Moderate orators, or the tales of economic exploitation circulated for nearly half a century by the nationalist press." The Development of Contemporary Indian Political Thought, (Baroda, 1940), p. 35.

24. 'Bengalee', (Calcutta, 7th July, 1905).

25. B.C. Pal, Swadeshi and Swaraj, (Calcutta, 1954), p. 45.

26. *Ibid*, p. 119.

Town Hall of Calcutta on 7th August, 1905, which was organised by the prominent leaders of Bengal like Surendranath Banerjea and Babu Ananth Bandhu Guha. The meeting was a grand success. Large number of people from all walks of life attended it. Resolutions were passed condemning the partition of Bengal and appealing to Government to repeal the same. But it did not have any effect on the Government. The Calcutta Town Hall meeting was followed by more than 2,000 public meetings in that province, attended by both the Hindus and the Muslims and differing in numbers from 500 to 5000 and sometimes even 50,000 people attended the meetings in some parts of Bengal. They all condemned the partition of Bengal and urged upon the Government to cancel it.<sup>27</sup>

The apologists of the Government described the agitation against partition as "the work of political wire-pullers and political agitators."<sup>28</sup> This was strongly rebutted by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the President, Indian National Congress Session of 1905 in the following words:

"To add insult to injury, Lord Curzon described the opposition to his measure as 'manufactured'—an opposition in which all classes of Indians, high and low, uneducated and educated, Hindus and Mohammedans, had joined, an opposition then which nothing more intense, nothing more widespread, nothing more spontaneous, had been seen in the Country in the whole (history) of our political agitation."<sup>29</sup>

27. R.C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom*, p. 26.

28. Lovat Fraser says that the agitation against the partition of Bengal was inspired by the vested interests, Calcutta Bar and the Calcutta native newspapers. "Behind the influence of the Bar and the newspapers lay all the vindictive animosity which had been aroused against Lord Curzon among educated Bengalis by the Universities Act. The wire-pullers had been searching for a pretext to attack him and they found it in the partition." *India Under Curzon and After*, pp. 384-385. Also See Ronaldshay, *Life of Lord Curzon*, Vol. II, (London, 1928) p. 322.

29. *Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, 1885 to 1910*, (G.A. Natesan & Co., Madras, 1935) p. 692.

The Government tried to suppress the anti-partition agitation by introducing repressive measures much on the Tsarian pattern. The singing of national songs and even the cry of 'Bande Mataram' were forbidden. School boys were prosecuted, military and punitive police were stationed in certain areas, public meetings were forcibly dispersed and even Surendranath Banerjea, a much respected leader was man-handled and humiliated at Barisal. Referring to the Barisal incident, Rash Behari Ghosh observed: "I have no hesitation in saying that we should be less than men if we could forget the tragedy of that day, the memory of which will always fill us with shame and humiliation."<sup>30</sup>

Besides, trying to suppress the agitation, the British Government also tried to win over the Muslims to its side. We have seen that the Muslims were opposed to the partition plan in the beginning. Lord Curzon had created a Muslim majority province, of course, without the Muslims demanding the same. He, therefore, thought it necessary to enlist the support of the Muslims to his plan. During his tour of East Bengal he had tried to impress upon his Muslim audience the benefit of partition to them. Moreover, "shortly after the partition the Government of India advanced a loan to relieve the Nawab's (Salim-ullah's) private munificence from bank-ruptcy—a loan amounting to about £ 100,000, at what was, for India, a very low rate of interest. This benevolent action, combined with certain privileges granted to Mohammedans, was supposed by many Hindus to have encouraged the Nawab and his co-religionists in taking a still more favourable view of the partition itself."<sup>31</sup> The Nawab was made to believe that in the new province the interests of the Musalmans will dominate the administration of the new province and the Nawab as their leader will occupy a unique position there.<sup>32</sup> Thus, "the

30. Rash Behari Ghosh added: "If Bengal is still in a disturbed condition, it is only because the partition of Bengal is a festering sore which will not be healed." *Ibid.*, p. 757.

31. Henry W. Nevinson, *The New Spirit in India*, (London, 1908) p. 193,

32. R.C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom*, p. 27.

British Government was able to win over Nawab Salimullah to its side." "The Musalmans of East Bengal", says A. C. Mazumdar. "headed by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca saw their opportunity and took the bait. Henceforth, the Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal forgetting the broader question of national advancement and ignoring the interests of their own community in Western Bengal deserted the national cause and gradually began to secede from the antipartition agitation."<sup>33</sup> Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the Lt. Governor of the new province, made certain indiscreet speeches which had the effect of setting the Muslims against the Hindus. He said that he was an incarnation of Shaista Khan, one of the Mughal Governors of Bengal under Aurangzeb, and said in jest that he had two wives, one Muslim and the other Hindu, and the Muhammedan wife was the favourite.<sup>34</sup> "The jest was taken in earnest, and the Musalmans genuinely believed that the British authorities were ready to forgive them all excesses."<sup>35</sup> This encouraged the Musalmans and it is said that "priestly Mullahs went through the country preaching the revival of Islam, and proclaiming to the villagers that the British Government was on the Muhammedan side, that the law courts had been specially suspended for three months, and no penalty would be exacted for violence done to Hindus, or for the loot of Hindu shops or the abduction of Hindu Widows."<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, riots broke out in Eastern Bengal at places like Comilla, Jamalpur, Mymensing, etc. "These communal riots came to be almost a normal feature in some parts of the Eastern Bengal."<sup>37</sup> Many people were killed; "temples were desecrated, images broken, shops plundered, and many Hindu

33. A.C. Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution, p. 207.

34. Sir B. Fuller writes: "I was like a man who was married to two wives, one a Hindu, the other a Muhammedan—both young and charming—but was forced into the arms of one of them by the rudeness of the other" Some Personal Experiences (John Murray, London, 1930), pp. 140-141.

35. Henry W. Nevinson, p. 192.

36. *Ibid*, p. 192.

37. R.C. Majumdar, Struggle for Freedom, p. 56.

widows carried off. Some of the towns were deserted, the Hindu population took refuge in any 'pukka' house (i.e. house with brick or stone walls), women spent nights hidden in tanks, the crime known as "group rape" increased, and throughout the country districts there reigned a general terror, which still prevailed at the time of my visit."<sup>38</sup>

But in spite of communal riots and of the Muslims joining the British Government, the Bengalis continued to agitate against the partition. They intensified the agitation by adopting the twin weapons of 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' against the British manufactured goods. They adopted these weapons only after the method of constitutional agitation namely prayers, protests, appeals, petitions and conferences had failed to get the partition of Bengal cancelled. It was, therefore, realised by the Bengalis that mere public meetings, protests and petitions were not enough. Something more concrete should be done to force an obdurate Government to submit to popular will. Thus the 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' movements were devised and used by the Bengalis as a political weapon to realise the object.

#### **Boycott and Swadeshi Movements:**

The 'Boycott' movement<sup>39</sup> was first used as part of the freedom struggle by the people of Ireland. The idea came to India in the last quarter of the 19th century when 'Boycott' of

38. Henry W. Nevinson, p. 193.

39. "The word 'Boycott' is associated with the name of Charles Cunningham Boycott an English estate manager who achieved notoriety during the agitation over the Irish land question when he became the originator of the word 'boycott'. Born in Norfolk on March 12, 1832, the son of a parson, he retired from the army with the rank of Captain and in 1873 became agent for the Earl of Erne's estate in County Mayo, Ireland ..Boycott became an agent for estates in Suffolk in 1886 and died there on June 19, 1897.

After 1880 the term 'boycott' soon came into common use and was at first used to describe all forms of non-violent intimidation; it is now generally synonymous with "sending to Coventry." 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', Vol. IV, p. 45.

foreign goods was advocated as a means for revival of Indian industries. ‘Boycott’ in Indian context meant abjuring the use of all foreign manufactured goods particularly salt, sugar, cloth etc. By ‘Swadeshi’, the use of indigenous products was recommended in place of foreign products. The Bengalis used these weapons with a two-fold object.—“first as a demonstration of their deep resentment at the treatment they were receiving, and secondly to attract the attention of the people in England to their grievances, so that those who were in a position to call the Government of India to account might understand what was taking place in India.”<sup>40</sup> They organised numerous public meetings in which ‘Boycott’ was preached and assembled people took solemn vows not to use foreign goods. Such meetings in Bengal were followed by meetings in other provinces as well. It is said that people from all walks of life participated in the ‘Boycott’ and ‘Swadeshi’ Movements. Hari Das Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee said that the zamindars, the pleaders, the students, the youths, the peasants and the shopkeepers and even medical men and native army, Brahmins and priests, barbers and washermen all “played an important part in the extension of the Boycott—Swadeshi Movement.”<sup>41</sup> The washermen held a meeting at Boalia in which they resolved not to wash foreign made clothes. The barbers refused to shave people who used foreign made goods. The priests in Jessor in East Bengal refused to perform Pujahs and ceremonies in the houses of people who used foreign goods.<sup>42</sup> Swadeshi volunteers picketed shops selling foreign goods and tried to persuade the customers and shopkeepers alike not to sell or purchase foreign goods. These volunteers often made a bonfire of foreign made cloth and shouted ‘Bande Mataram’. Sometimes the over-enthusiasm of these volunteers in preventing people from purchasing foreign made articles resulted in police interference. Consequently, the police used the so-called “mild lathi charge” and Swadeshi volunteers were mercilessly beaten. Cases were

- 40. Karve and Ambekar, *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. II, (Political), (Poona, 1966), pp. 195-196.
- 41. Haridas and Uma Mukherjees, *India’s Fight for Freedom*, (Calcutta, 1958), p. 223.
- 42. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

instituted against them and the volunteer students were punished by their schools and colleges as well.<sup>43</sup>

The protagonists of the Boycott and the Swadeshi movements used another powerful weapon against those who used foreign made goods and that was the weapon of social ostracism. They would treat him as a social out-caste. They would jeer at him and insult him in the street. Boys and girls in the schools and in the neighbourhood would be advised not to play with the children of people who used foreign articles. Even sometimes in Bengal it became difficult for such people to marry their sons and daughters. The result of the Boycott and Swadeshi movements was that the import of British goods fell considerably. The Government used all sorts of repression, but the Bengalis would neither bend nor break.

While the Bengalis were fighting for the annulment of the partition, the country as a whole did not watch like a silent spectator. The entire country sympathised with the Bengalis and openly sided with them. "The Parsi, the Maratha, the Madrasi, the Sindhi, and the Punjabi rose as one man with the Bengali to undo the 'settled fact'."<sup>44</sup> The Honourable Mr. Krishnan Nair of Madras, feelingly observed at the Congress of 1908: "The partition of Bengal affects the whole country like a deep, bleeding and unhealing wound. So long as such a wound exists in the human body it is difficult, if not impossible, for that body to know peace or enjoy repose."<sup>45</sup> Gokhale in his presidential address at the Congress of 1905 described the Partition of Bengal as a "cruel wrong" which had been inflicted "on our Bengali brethren and the whole country has been stirred to its deepest depths in sorrow and resentment, as had never been the case before." He further

43. R.C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom*, p. 38.

44. A.C. Mazumdar, p. 214.

45. Proceedings of the 23rd Indian National Congress, Madras, 1908, p. 85.

Hon'ble Mr. Krishnan Nair observed: "The Partition of Bengal ... like the famous Pandora's box has brought untold miseries upon the Government and the people... If the Partition is a settled fact, the unrest in India is also a settled fact..." *Ibid.*, p. 85.

observed: "The scheme of Partition, concocted in the dark and carried out in the face of the fiercest opposition that any Government measure has encountered during the last half century will always stand as a complete illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule—its utter contempt for public opinion, its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feelings of the people, the mockery of an appeal to its sense of justice, its cool preference of service interests to those of the governed . . ."<sup>46</sup>

The Indian National Congress was opposed to the proposal of the partition ever since it came to know of it. The Congress of 1903 expressed its "deep concern" at the Government's intention of "breaking up territorial division which have been of long standing."<sup>47</sup> The Congress of 1904 at its Bombay Session protested "against the proposal of the Government of India for the Partition of Bengal in any manner whatsoever."<sup>48</sup> But when in spite of public opinion, the Government divided Bengal, the Congress registered a strong protest against the partition at its Banaras Session in 1905. It passed the following resolution :

"That this Congress records its emphatic protests against the Partition of Bengal in the face of the strongest opposition on the part of the people of the province. That having regard to the intense dissatisfaction felt by the entire Bengali community at the dismemberment of their province and their manifest disinclination to accept the partition as an accomplished fact, this Congress appeals to the Government of India and the Secretary of State to reverse or modify the arrangements made, in such a manner as to conciliate public opinion and allay

46. Congress Presidential Addresses, (Natesan & Co., Madras, 1935), pp. 691-692. Also Kavve and Ambedkar, Speeches & Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Vol. II—Political, (Poona, 1966), p. 191.

47. Proceedings of the 19th Indian National Congress, Madras, 1903, Resolution No. IX, p. 128.

48. Proceedings of the 20th Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904, Resolution No. XIV, p. XXXIV.

## 16      *The Partition of Bengal 1905-11*

the excitement and unrest present among all classes of the people.”<sup>49</sup>

From 1905 to 1911, rarely a year passed when the Congress did not press for the annulment of the partition of Bengal. It registered its “emphatic protest against the Partition of Bengal” at its Bhowanipur Session in 1906. It desired “earnestly to impress upon the British Parliament and the present Liberal Government that it will be not only just, but expedient, to reverse or modify the partition in such a manner as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one undivided administration and thus restore contentment to so important a province as Bengal.”<sup>50</sup> The Nagpur Congress of 1907 appealed “to the Government of India, and the Secretary of State for India to reverse the Partition of Bengal, or to modify it in such a manner as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one and the same administration.” The Congress felt that the rectification “of this admitted error will restore contentment to the province of Bengal, give satisfaction to the other provinces and instead of impairing, will enhance the prestige of His Majesty’s Government throughout the country.”<sup>51</sup> This resolution was reaffirmed at Madras in 1908. The Lahore Congress of 1909 appealed to the Government of India and the Secretary of State “not to treat the question of the Partition of Bengal as incapable of re-consideration, but to take the earliest opportunity so to modify the said Partition as to keep

49. Twenty-first Congress Banaras, 1905, Resolution No. XII ‘Full Text of All the Presidential Addresses, Reprint of All Congress Resolutions’ etc., (Natesan & Co., Madras, nd.,) p. 157.

The Congress records another resolution at the same session “its earnest and emphatic protests against the repressive measures which have been adopted by the authorities in Bengal after the people there had been compelled to resort to the Boycott of the foreign goods as a last protest ..” *Ibid.*, p. 158.

50. Twenty-Second Congress, Calcutta, 1906, Resolution No. VI, ‘Full Text of All the Presidential Addresses, Reprint of All Congress Resolutions etc,’ (Natesan & Co., Madras, nd.,) p. 164.

51. Report of the 23rd Indian National Congress, Nagpur, 1907, Resolution No. V, p. 3.

the entire Bengali-speaking community under one and the same administration.”<sup>52</sup>

The Congress of 1909 appointed a two-man deputation consisting of Surendranath Banerjea and Bhupendranath Bose to proceed to England to lay the question of the Partition before the authorities and the public there and to seek its reversal. But nothing came out of it.<sup>53</sup> The Congress was, therefore once again seized of the matter at its Allahabad Session held in 1910 in which it submitted “that the rectification of this admitted error will be an act of far-sighted statesmanship.”<sup>54</sup>

The Congress did not merely express lip sympathy with the Bengalis, but adopted ‘Boycott’ and ‘Swadeshi’ as its own cult. Speaking of Swadeshism, Gokhale spoke in 1905 at the 21st Congress, “You see the cradle of a New India. To speak of such a movement as disloyal is a lie and calumny. We love England, with all her faults, but we love India more. If this is disloyalty, we are, I am proud to say, disloyal.”<sup>55</sup> Mr. C.Y. Chintamani moved the resolution at the Twenty-fifth Congress supporting the Swadeshi movement and urged upon the educated people to help indigenous industries by using their products.<sup>56</sup> The Allahabad Congress of 1910 supported the Swadeshi movement in the following words :

“That this Congress accords its most cordial support to the Swadeshi Movement, and calls upon the people of the country to labour for its success by making earnest and

52. Proceedings of the 24th Indian National Congress, Lahore, 1909, Resolution No. VIII, p. 81.
53. Surendranath Banerjea though he came back empty handed from England in 1909 felt a deliberate conviction “that the Partition was not to be regarded as a settled fact, despite Lord Morley’s oft-repeated declarations to the contrary,...” *A Nation is Making* p. 261.
54. Proceedings of the 25th Indian National Congress, Resolution No. X, p. 63.
55. Congress Presidential Addresses, (Natesan & Co., Madras, 1935), p. 698.
56. Proceedings of the 25th Indian National Congress, Allahabad, 1910, p. 45.

sustained efforts to promote the growth of industries capable of development in this country, and to respond to the efforts of Indian producers by giving preference, whenever practicable, to Indian products over imported commodities, even at a sacrifice.”<sup>57</sup>

Under the influence of the Congress, the Swadeshi and the Boycott Movements made considerable progress in the United Provinces, Central Provinces, Bombay Presidency, Punjab and the Madras Presidency. Thus, the Boycott and the Swadeshi Movements assumed an All-India character. “The progress of the movement was reported from 23 districts in the United Provinces, 15 towns in the Central Provinces, 24 towns in the Bombay Presidency, 20 districts in the Punjab and 13 districts in Madras Presidency.”<sup>58</sup>

B.G. Tilak, his daughter Mrs. Ketkar, S.M. Paranjpye, and Mrs. A. V. Joshi were notable leaders of the Swadeshi and Boycott movements in Bombay. The Punjab found its prominent Swadeshi leaders in Ram Ganga Ram, Pt. Chandrika Dutt of the Arya Samaj and Munshi Ram later known as Swami Shradhanand, a pleader of Jullundar and a notable Arya Samajist. The movement was propagated in Madras by Subramania Aiyer, Ananda Charlu and T.M. Nair. They were the most enthusiastic advocates of the Swadeshi and Boycott. On 1st December, 1905 at an important meeting Mr. P. Ananda Charlu, as its Chairman, Mr. Nair moved a resolution justifying Boycott as adopted by the Bengalis and characterised it as “a weapon of a weak nation against a strong nation.”<sup>59</sup> “From Lahore and Hardwar”, said Hari Das and Uma Mukherjee, “reports came that the Pandas were refusing to accept sweet meats made of foreign sugar.”<sup>60</sup> Leaflets in Marathi were found pasted in public places in Poona urging men “to boycott the foreign goods in the name of religion.”<sup>61</sup> They added: “The Movement bore special fruits in the Bombay

57. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

58. R C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom*, p. 45.

59. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, p. 236.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

Presidency. The tremendous increase in the demand of indigenous goods gave a great impetus to the production in the mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad which sold about 1,00,000 bales of cloth to the merchants during August-September, 1905 and a sale six months ahead.”<sup>62</sup> Sadhus at Puri pledged themselves to the “propagation of Swadeshi ideology throughout India.”<sup>63</sup>

The Partition of Bengal roused most intense public opposition in the United Provinces, the Punjab, Madras, Bombay and Central Provinces. It was an All-India movement which roused the entire country from one corner to the other. “For the first time since British rule began”, declared Gokhale, “all sections of the Indian community, without distinction of caste or creed, have been moved by a common impulse and without the stimulus of external pressure, to act together in offering resistance to a common wrong.”<sup>64</sup> The reaction of the people in different provinces to the Partition of Bengal was as under :

#### **Reaction in the United Provinces:**

The people of the United Provinces did not lag behind their Bengali brethren in protesting against the Partition of Bengal. The ‘Indian People’ observed: “It is not difficult to imagine with what feeling our brethren of Bengal will receive the above (the scheme of Partition). . . . They have all but exhausted every resource of constitutional agitation in fighting against proposals which they abhor; but to no purpose. . . . The old sense of British Justice and British respect for public opinion seems to have vanished in these days of Balfours, Brodricks and Curzons.”<sup>65</sup> The ‘Advocate’ of Lucknow said that the “partition was not needed, but was pressed forward with ulterior motive.” It accused the Viceroy of carrying

62. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 234-235.

64. Congress Presidential Addresses, Natesan & Co., (Madras, 1935), p. 696. Also Karve and Ambekar, Speeches & Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Vol. I,—Political, pp. 194-195.

65. ‘Indian People’, (Allahabad, 9th July, 1905).

out the scheme of partition "in a manner most distasteful to the people" and warned the Government that partition "will not succeed in dividing a people united in sentiments"<sup>66</sup> The 'Citizen' of 24th July, 1905, described the partition of Bengal as a national calamity and requested the Government to reconsider its decision and rectify the mistake.<sup>67</sup> The 'Advocate' attributed the Partition of Bengal to the *Divide et impera* policy of the British Government, and said that the Partition had not been liked by the people of the affected areas and it had been condemned by people from all walks of life, the landholders and the professional classes, the traders and the tillers of the soil.<sup>68</sup> The 'Indian People' of 7th September, 1905 commented: "It is enough to us that a unanimous public opinion has condemned the Government's proposals in a most unmistakable language. Bengalis regard the partition as a political measure aimed at their progress which will be productive of direful consequences. They may be right in their apprehensions or they may not be; we ourselves are convinced they are right. What then? Should the opinions, the wishes, the aspirations, the feelings, the sentiments of millions of people go for nothing at all?"<sup>69</sup>

The progress of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal was watched with sympathy and admiration in the United Provinces. "The agitation over this partition business", said the 'Indian People', "has been the most unprecedented in the annals of the history of India under the British—an agitation carried on on the most constitutional line—and the step that our friends of the lower provinces have taken is only the natural sequence of the series of events."<sup>70</sup> The 'Citizen' of 9th April, 1906 said in its editorial, "We would conclude by exhorting our Bengali brethren to muster courage to carry on the agitation as vigorously and in as concentrated a manner as they have been doing splendidly so long. They have by

66. 'Advocate', (Lucknow, 13th July, 1905).

67. 'Citizen', (Allahabad, 24th July, 1905).

68. 'Advocate', (Lucknow, 30th July, 1905).

69. 'Indian People', (Allahabad, 7th September, 1905).

70. *Ibid.*, 5th October, 1905.

Their united action attracted attention not merely of India, but of the whole civilised world. The psychological moment has arrived when they should be ready to extend their sphere of activities to England.”<sup>71</sup>

The arrest and imprisonment of Babu Surendranath Banerjea at Barisal on 16th April, 1906 caused anguish, and resentment and provoked angry comments in the newspapers. The ‘Advocate’ declared that no human power could degrade Surendranath Banerjea in the eyes of his countrymen<sup>72</sup> The ‘Hindustani’ of 25th April, 1906 and the ‘Oudh Akhbar’ of 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th April, 1906 condemned the incident in the strongest possible language. “The man whom the magistrate of Barisal”, declared the ‘Indian People’, “sentenced to a fine stands higher today in the estimation of his countrymen than he did the day before the District Superintendent of Police arrested him, and men pushed one another in the struggle to take the dust of his feet.”<sup>73</sup> The ‘Citizen’ of 23rd April, 1906 said, “Babu Surendranath is a citizen of the empire, belonging as much to the United Provinces, the Punjab, Bombay and Madras as to the United Bengal herself. Distance, they say, lends a charm to an object. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Bengal patriot is regarded by the people in the other provinces as a veritable hero, and his actions may inspire in them a like spirit of self devotion.”<sup>74</sup> The ‘Nasim-i-Agra’ of 30th April, 1906 said that the Barisal incident had infused a new spirit in the hearts of the Indians all over the country and dispelled the illusive hopes they had in the impartialities of the British Government.<sup>75</sup>

The arrest and conviction of Surendranath Banerjea at Barisal “was followed by meetings of protest under the auspices of the Indian National Congress all over India, and gave a fresh lease of life to the agitation against the

71. ‘Citizen’, (Allahabad, 9th April, 1906).

72. ‘Advocate’, (Lucknow, 19th April, 1906).

73. ‘Indian People’, (Allahabad, 19th April, 1906).

74. ‘Citizen’, (Allahabad, 23rd April, 1906).

75. ‘Nasim-i-Agra’, (30th April, 1906).

partition.”<sup>76</sup> Protest meetings were held at Allahabad under the auspices of people like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya.<sup>77</sup> On 29th April, 1906 at the Swadeshi Bazar at Agra, a protest meeting was held under the Presidentship of Mr. Gobind Sahai, a local Barrister. These meetings condemned the treatment meted out to Babu Surendranath Banerjea at Barisal and a telegram explaining the unprecedented state of intense alarm and indignation caused by the arrest of Surendranath Banerjea was sent to the Viceroy with a request to soothe public excitement.<sup>78</sup>

The atrocities of Sir Bampfylde Fuller in Eastern Bengal were condemned in unmistakable language. The public opinion attributed Hindu-Muslim riots in East Bengal to his unwise utterances. The ‘Indian People’ said, “The fact is clear as day that the trouble is entirely due to the foolish speeches of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, his announcement that he was an incarnation of Shaista Khan, his senseless talk of a Hindu and a Mohammedan wife, and his systematic persecution of Hindus. Wherever he went, he set the Mohammedans against the Hindus, and his officers took their cue from him.”<sup>79</sup>

76. Summary of the Administration of the Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, November, 1905-1910, Home Deptt., para. 2, pp. 5-6.

77. ‘Citizen’, (Allahabad, 30th April, 1906).

78. ‘Advocate’, (Lucknow, 3rd May, 1906).

79. ‘Indian People’, 17th May, 1906.

The Government records place the blame of the riots on the aggressive attitude of the Swadeshi volunteers. “The aggressive attitude of the ‘volunteers’ at fairs and bazaars led to serious disturbances in April and May, 1907 in the Mymensingh district, where forceable attempts were made to prevent Mohammedan shopkeepers from dealing in foreign made goods. General rioting followed, the Mohammedan shopkeepers and ryots, already irritated by a long course of interference on the part of the agitators, being encouraged to attack the Hindus by adventurers eager for plunder or actuated by a desire for revenge for personal grievances.” Summary of the Administration of the Earl of Minto, Home Department, para 4, pp. 6-7.

Sir Verney Lovett also holds the Hindu political leaders’ attempt to

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The Muslim opinion in the United Provinces favoured the partition and urged the Government not to annul it. The 'Aligarh Institute Gazette' said, "The partition of Bengal will prove a God-send to the Musalman residents of that province, who will now find a splendid opportunity for making rapid progress both in their education and social position."<sup>80</sup> The 'Al Bashir' of Etawah in its issues of 3rd October, 1905, 10th October, 1905, 16th January, 1906, and 23rd January, 1906 observed that the partition of Bengal was good for the Muslims as it would provide them better opportunities and inducements to receive education and made a strong plea that the partition of Bengal should not be annulled. The 'Riyazul-Akhbar' of Gorakhpur, 24th April, 1906 condemned the anti-partition agitation and said that the real cause of the agitation was that the Bengalis did not want the Mohammedans of that province to make progress.<sup>81</sup> The 'Zamana' of April and May, 1906 published the opinions of some prominent Muslim leaders of the time like Altaf Hussain Hali of Panipat, Zakaullah of Delhi, Maulana Shibli, Ghulam-us Saqlain, editor of 'Asr-i-Jadid', Abdul Kadir, late editor of the 'Observer' and Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal, on the partition issue and the Swadeshi Movement. Hali admitted the usefulness of the Swadeshi Movement but urged that it should be disassociated from the anti-partition agitation, before the

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enforce disuse or destruction of European goods on the unwilling Mohammedans as responsible for the riots. A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement, (Delhi, 1972), p. 65.

Henry W. Nevinson, an English journalist who visited India at that time, however, holds the British Government responsible for communal riots in East Bengal. "I have almost invariably found English officers and officials on the side of the Mohammedans... It was against Hindus only that all the petty prosecution of officialdom was directed. It was they who were excluded from Government posts;...When Mohammedans rioted, the punitive police ransacked Hindu houses and companies of little Gorkhas were quartered on Hindu population..." The New Spirit in India, p. 202.

80. Aligarh Institute Gazette', (13th June, 1906).

81. Report on Native Press in U.P., Vol. January-August, 1906 pp. 248-249.

Musalmans could be persuaded to join the Swadeshi movement. Maulavi Zakaullah said that the Swadeshi movement was good in itself, but he too, did not favour the anti-partition agitation. Maulana Shibli said that nothing could be more beneficial to India than the Swadeshi movement provided it had not been started to intimidate the Government into complying with the demands of the Bengalis. Khwaja Ghulam-us-Saqlain thought that the Swadeshi movement was good for both Hindus and Musalmans, but did not approve of the boycott of only English goods. Shaikh Abdul Kadir wrote that a true Swadeshi movement and not a transitory outburst of patriotism in resentment against a Government measure was sure to prove a blessing to the country, provided that it was maintained with perseverance and patience. Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal admitted that the Swadeshi movement was useful to both Hindus and Musalmans, but did not like the boycott of only English goods.<sup>82</sup>

These Musalman leaders while favouring the Swadeshi movement did not want it to be used as a weapon to coerce the Government to annul the partition of Bengal. The 'Rohilkhand Gazette' of 24th August, 1906 said that the question of the partition of Bengal should not be reconsidered and went so far as to advise the Musalmans to keep aloof from the Swadeshi movement.<sup>83</sup> The 'Mufid-i-Am' of 24th September, 1906 and the 'Tohfa-i-Hind' of 26th September, 1906 advised the Musalmans to keep away from the anti-partition agitation. The 'Agra Akhbar' of 28th September, 1906 gave the same advice to its co-religionists. Thus, the Muslim opinion in the province was for the partition of Bengal, as they thought that it was beneficial to the Muslims of that province. They did not think that the entire Bengali people both Hindus and Musalmans were one people and spoke the same language.<sup>84</sup>

82. 'Zamana', (Kanpur, April & May, 1906).

83. 'Rohilkhand Gazette', (Bareilly, 24th August, 1906).

84. The Muslim opinion as reflected by the Muslim League also supported the creation of a Muslim majority province in Bengal. Vide Resolution No. IV of 1906, the Muslim League resolved : "that this

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**Punjab:**

"Under the influence of the Bengali agitators anti-British propaganda was being actively carried on in the Punjab."<sup>85</sup> The introduction into the Punjab Legislative Council of a Bill "to amend the colonisation act as regards the tenure on which land was held in the canal colonies in the Punjab was denounced as a breach of faith on the part of the Government. Violent agitation followed, in the course of which attempts were made to stir up the agricultural classes and to form combinations for withholding the payment of Government revenue." The editor of the 'Punjabee', an important newspaper of Lahore, was prosecuted for publishing an article alleging that a native had been murdered by an English officer. The police who were taking the editor from the court to the jail were attacked by a crowd of people who pelted them with mud and garlanded the editor. There were violent demonstrations at the residence of the

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meeting, in view of the clear interest of the Musalmans of Eastern Bengal, considers that the partition is sure to prove beneficial to the Mohammedan community which constitutes the vast majority of that province, and that all such methods of agitation as boycotting, should be strongly condemned and discouraged." Foundation of Pakistan—All India Muslim League Documents (1906-47) Edited by Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, Vol. I. (Karachi, 1969) p. 12.

Syed Ali Imam, in his presidential address at the 2nd session of the Muslim League at Amritsar, 1908, said: "I cannot say what you think, but when I find the most advanced province of India put forward the sectarian cry of 'Bande Mataram' as the national cry and the sectarian Rakhibandhan as a national observance, my heart is filled with despair and disappointment; and the suspicion that under the cloak of nationalism, Hindu nationalism is preached in India becomes a conviction." *Ibid.*, p. 51.

The Muslim League reiterated its earlier stand and resolved in 1908 that "the partition has given a new life to the people in the Eastern province. They are feeling a refreshing sense and a relief from the thraldom of Calcutta." Resolution No. XIV of 1908, *Ibid.*, p. 85. Thus we find that the Muslim League was in favour of the partition of Bengal.

85. Summary of the Administration of the Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor General of India, Home Department, November, 1905-1910, Simla, 1910, para 5, p. 7.

Deputy Commissioner at Rawalpindi, where the mob looted a Post Office and burnt the furniture in a Mission house. Consequent upon these disturbances, Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh were arrested and sent to Mandalay. The Government issued an Ordinance known as the Regulation of Meetings Ordinances, 1907 prohibiting the holding of seditious meetings in the Punjab, Eastern Bengal and Assam.<sup>86</sup>

### **Madras:**

During the course of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal Bipin Chandra Pal toured the Madras Presidency and delivered several important speeches. His visit "led to anti-British disturbances and disorderly behaviour, particularly among students."<sup>87</sup> On 31st May, 1907, a student is alleged to have insulted Major Kemp, I.M.S., the District Medical Officer of Cocanada. Major Kemp struck the youth and the result was that a mob collected the same evening and attacked and wrecked the club where he was dining.<sup>88</sup> On 21st June, 1907, the Government of Madras were obliged to punish several of the students of the Rajahmundry College for defying the orders of the Principal at the time of B. C. Pal's visit. On 25th July, 1907, a police constable attacked the Assistant Superintendent of Police Cocanada with a bayonet. On 30th August, 1907, a mob of students attacked the Senate House ; a Police Inspector named Bell was murdered at Rajahmundry in September, 1907 by a constable, who immediately after committed suicide. But the constable's funeral became "the occasion of a violent anti-European and anti-Government demonstration."<sup>89</sup> Under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code Chidambaram Pillay and two of his associates were tried for holding seditious meetings in Tinnevelly and Tuticorin. They were eventually convicted under Sections 124-A and 153-A of the Indian Penal Code and sentenced to transportation for life.

86. *Ibid.*, para, 5, p. 7.

87. *Ibid.*, para, 6, p. 7.

88. *Ibid.*, para, 6, p. 7.

89. *Ibid.*, para, 6, p. 8.

### Bombay and Central Provinces:

There were disturbances in the Bombay city in July 1908 more particularly among the mill workers in consequence of the prosecution of Bal Gangadhar Tilak for sedition.<sup>90</sup> The police and the troops had to be employed and on six different days they opened fire on the mob and according to the Government version 15 people were killed and 38 wounded.<sup>91</sup> Several police officers were also wounded. The Mission House at Pandharpur was attacked and one of the Missionaries, Miss Steele was badly beaten; riots occurred in Nagpur in the course of which Mr. Jones, Principal of the Morris College was stoned

### Terrorist Activities In Bengal:

The anti-partition agitation in Bengal was peaceful and constitutional in the beginning, but when it appeared that it was not yielding any fruit, some youngmen adopted terrorist methods and used pistols and bombs indiscriminately. They made an unsuccessful attempt to blow up a train in which the Lt. Governor of Bengal was travelling and an attempt was made to murder B. C. Allen, District Magistrate of Dacca. There were some more disturbances in East Bengal in which a number of Europeans were attacked. Mr. Higgenbotham, a Missionary at Kushtia in Bengal, was attacked on 4th March, 1908 but he escaped. On 30th April, 1908, a bomb intended for the district judge, Mr. Kingsford, who was formerly Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, was thrown by mistake into a carriage in which Mrs. and Miss. Kennedy, the wife and daughter of a European pleader, were returning home from a club at Muzaffarpur. Both the ladies died of their injuries.<sup>92</sup> The Calcutta Police discovered a secret society connected with the 'Yugantar' and 'Bande Mataram', newspapers. The object of the society 'was to train youngmen throughout Bengal to murder officials by means of fire arms and explosives in the hope of ultimately paralysing the

90. *Ibid.*, para. 9, p. 9.

91. *Ibid.*, para. 9, p. 9.

92. K.C. Ghosh, *The Roll of Honour*, (Calcutta 1965) p. 161.

administrarion.”<sup>93</sup> Several arrests were made in this connection and most of those arrested were the students. On 7th November, 1908, a Bangali student attempted unsuccessfully to shoot the Lt. Governor of Bengal. Two days later, Nandolal Banerji, a Sub-inspector of Police was shot dead in the streets of Calcutta and the perpetrators of this outrage could not be traced.<sup>94</sup>

To swell the revolutionary funds, there were a number of political dacoities in Bengal. Eight such dacoities occurred in 1908; in 1909 and 1910, seventeen such occurrences were reported.<sup>95</sup> The most daring dacoity was committed at Rajendrapur in Dacca in a running train in the Assam-Bengal railway in which a consignment of bullion was stolen by a party of armed revolutionaries who killed one of the persons guarding the consignment and wounded two others, escaping with their spoil from the train in motion.<sup>96</sup>

#### **Annulment of the Partition :**

The effect of the anti-partition agitation, the adoption by the people of Swadeshi and Boycott movements, supported by the Indian National Congress, and the people of the country as a whole and the terrorist activities in Bengal convinced the British Government that the Bengalis would rather break but not bend on this issue. Thus, to soothe public opinion, the British Government decided to annul the partition of Bengal and an announcement to that effect was made by His Majesty in person at Delhi on 12th December, 1911.

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**The news of the annulment of the partition of Bengal was received with joy all over India, particularly in Bengal. “So**

- 93. Summary of the Administration of Earl of Minto, Home Department, Simla, 1910, para 8, p. 9.
- 94. Nandolal Banerjee was responsible for the death of Prafulla Chaki who was one of the two responsible for the Muzaffarpore bomb-outrage.
- 95. Summary of the Administration of the Earl of Minto, Home Department, Simla, 1910, para 12, p. 12.
- 96. *Itid.*, para 12, p. 12.

great was the joy and enthusiasm created by the announcement". says A.C. Mazumdar, "that after the King left, a number of youngmen, mostly Bengalis, rushed in and kneeling before the throne reverently kissed the footsteps from which the announcement had just been made."<sup>97</sup> Surendranath Banerjea says that he witnessed a "wild scene of excitement" at the College Square, Calcutta. "It was quite dark—there were no lights—we could not see one another, but we could hear voices shouting with joy and occasionally interjecting questions."<sup>98</sup> Speaking on Resolution No. 11 at the Twentysixth Congress held at Calcutta in 1911, Mr. Ambikacharan Mozumdar said : "Gentlemen, on this day of universal rejoicing when every heart in India in general and in Bengal in particular is beating in unison with reverence and devotion to the British Throne and over-flowing with revived confidence and gratitude towards British statesmanship, I will not—I dare not—recount the painful records and recall the bitter memories of the past five years. Let the dead past bury its dead. Let suspicion and distrust, malice and rancour, rage and repression—those evil spirits that revel in darkness—vanish from the land, and let cavil and calumny be hushed into silence... The nation of Howard and Wilberforce, of Edmund Burke, and Ewart Gladstone, of Henry Fawcett and John Bright, of Bentinck, Canning and Ripon, cannot perpetrate a wrong, and if it ever does, it will that day cease to be the greatest nation that it is on the surface of the earth."<sup>99</sup>

The Congress and important organs of public opinion thanked the British Government for undoing the wrong. The Congress of 1911 recorded its sense of gratitude to the Government of India for recommending the modification of the partition of Bengal and to the Secretary of State for sanctioning it. It also thanked His Majesty, the King Emperor for the same.<sup>100</sup> The 'Leader' of Allahabad welcomed the news of the

97. A.C. Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution, p. 223.

98. Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making p. 266.

99. Annie Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom, (Delhi, 1974) pp. 533-534.

100. Twentysixth Congress, Calcutta, 1911, Resolution No. II, 'Congress, Cyclopaedia', Vol. I by K. Iswara Dutt, (Delhi, 1967) p. 256.

annulment of the partition and observed "the announcement about the territorial redistribution will come to Bengal as healing balm to its gaping wounds and the Bengalis could not have wished for a more complete vindication of the justice of their cause and British statesmanship could not have wished for a more graceful and a more telling manner of vindicating its reputation for wisdom and resourcefulness."<sup>101</sup> The 'Oudh Akhbar' of 15th December, 1911, said that the announcement would cause sincere joy and pleasure to the people of Bengal.<sup>102</sup> The 'Abhyudaya' of 17th December, 1911, felt that the undoing of the partition will give the utmost satisfaction not only to the Bengalis but to all thoughtful Indians.<sup>103</sup>

The annulment of the partition of Bengal "removed the ground of agitation which had been afforded by the original partition, and indeed, it seemed at last that the bitter incidents of recent years were to give place to the peaceful development of the country characteristic of the British Administration."<sup>104</sup> To some extent, immediately after partition this hope of the Government was realised. Dacoities still continued in Bengal, but were less numerous than in other years."<sup>105</sup> However, this annulment did not bring lasting peace. Surendranath Banerjea lamented that the partition of Bengal was not modified in 1906. "If it had been modified just when the agitation was assuming a serious aspect and the whole country was seething with excitement, the history of Bengal, and possibly of India, would have been differently written...."<sup>106</sup> He thought that the "partition and the policy that was adopted to support it were the root cause of the anarchical movement in Bengal."<sup>107</sup>

101. 'Leader', (Allahabad, 14th December, 1911).

102. 'Oudh Akhbar', (15th December, 1911.)

103. 'Abhyudaya,' (Allahabad, 17th December, 1911.)

104. Summary of the Administration of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, November, 1910 to March 1916, p. 15.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

106. Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 267.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

The Muslims were, however, unhappy that the partition had been set-aside. Nawab Mushtaq Hussain remarked that the re-union of the two Bengals would be viewed with disfavour by the Muslims who had everything to gain by the partition.<sup>108</sup> Nawab Salimullah Bahadur of Dacca, in his presidential address, at the 5th Session of the Muslim League held at Calcutta in March 1912 said : "To us, the Musalmans of East Bengal, the annulment means the deprivation of those splendid opportunities at self-improvement which we had secured by the partition. But it is not the loss of these opportunities merely,... that forms the burden of grief over the annulment of the partition. It is the manner in which the change has been brought about, without even warning, or consulting us, which adds to the poignancy of our grief."<sup>109</sup>

The partition of Bengal and the agitation against it had far-reaching effects on the Indian history and national life. The twin weapons of 'Swadeshi' and 'Boycott' adopted by the Bengalis became a creed with the Indian National Congress and they were used more effectively in future conflicts with the Government. They formed the basis of Gandhi's non-co-operation, Satyagraha and Khadi movement. The Indians had discovered the unique value of the methods of passive resistance, Swadeshi and Boycott movements. They also had come to know that organised political agitation and public opinion can force the Government to accede to public demand.

But the annulment of the partition, as a result of agitation against it, had a bad effect on the Muslim mind. The Muslims did not like the Congress support to anti-partition agitation. The majority of the politically conscious Muslims felt that the Congress had supported a Hindu agitation against the creation

108. 'Aligarh Institute Gazette', (20th December, 1911.)

109. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, Vol. I, p. 237.

Nawab Salimullah said : "the Musalmans of East Bengal supported the partition, not out of enmity to our Hindu brethren or at the bidding of the government, but because we felt sure that the new administrative arrangements in East Bengal would afford us ample opportunities for self improvement...." *Ibid*, p. 236.

of a Muslim majority province. It reinforced the Muslim's belief that their interests were not safe in the hands of the Congress. Thus, they rushed more and more towards the Muslim League to safeguard their interests. The Muslims now came to the definite conclusion that they would never be treated fairly and justly by the Congress and the Hindu majority. If they wanted to safeguard their interests, they must strengthen their own organisation i.e. the Muslim League. True, a number of Musalmans continued to take part in the deliberations of the Congress, but the rank and file of the Muslims were never able to reconcile themselves to the Congress claim that it was a national organisation which looked after the interest of the Hindus and the Muslims alike. Thus, the attempt to divide Bengal failed, but the mischief aimed at i.e. driving a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims and accentuating their differences, succeeded.

Select Documents  
on  
The Partition of Bengal



## Surendranath Banerjea on the Partition of Bengal

The year 1905 is one of the most memorable in the history of Bengal. It would be no exaggeration to say that it was an epoch-making year, leaving a profound and far-reaching influence on the public life of Bengal and the future of the country. It was the year of the Partition of Bengal.

There had been for some time a general feeling in official quarters that Bengal was too large a charge for a single ruler, and that the partition of the province was necessary in the interests of administrative efficiency. It was in pursuance of this idea that the province of Assam was separated from Bengal in 1874, and made a separate administrative unit under a Chief Commissioner. The separation did not, at the time, excite much criticism, although in the province thus separated from Bengal there were three Bengalee-speaking districts, namely, Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara. Public opinion was not then much of a power, and the solidarity of the Bangalee-speaking people and their growing sense of unity had not become so pronounced a factor in the public life of the province. The change was acquiesced in without demur, possibly it was welcomed by the people of Assam, who hoped that special attention would be paid to their interests.

But there is growth in all things, good or bad—nothing stationary in administration or in other human concerns. Soon the bureaucracy discovered that a further expansion of the scheme of partition was required, in the interests of efficiency as well as of the Service. Assam had no cadre of its own. The Civil Service appointments for the province were too few to justify a special cadre. Civil servants from Bengal and sometimes from the United Provinces took up appointments in Assam, but after a term reverted to their own provinces, the high appointments being few and the prospects limited. The interests of the Civil Service, with which undoubtedly the interests of the province were to some extent bound up, demanded that Assam should be a self contained province.

The idea of a further partition for the creation of a greater Assam loomed large in the official view. The proposal was made, that the Chittagong Division, comprising the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali and Tippera, should be withdrawn from Bengal and tacked on to the Province of Assam. The proposal elicited a strong protest from the people of the Chittagong Division, supported by the public opinion of Bengal. The reformed Legislative Council had come into existence. Public opinion was becoming a growing power and could no longer be altogether ignored. The proposal was dropped in view of the strong public protest; but it was never completely shelved. It lingered in the subterranean depths of the official consciousness, to emerge into view in more propitious circumstances.

Lord Curzon was now at the head of affairs. His energy was feverish. He was upsetting and unsettling things. The question of boundaries attracted his attention. The map of India was to be recast, but by pacific methods and with the impress of his genius and superior personality stamped thereon. Here was this unsettled question. It was taken up and its scope further expanded. The proposal now assumed the form of the separation from Bengal of the whole of the Chittagong Division, to which the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh were to be added, and this area was to be incorporated into Assam.

It was in this form that the proposal came up for discussion before the public of Bengal. It roused strong opposition among all sections of the community—Hindus and Mohamedans alike. It was an opposition that the Government could not ignore. The Government sought to persuade and to conciliate by conferences with the leaders of East Bengal. These conferences were held at 'Belvedere' under the presidency of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Andrew Fraser. They were organized by the newly-formed Land-holders' Association, of which the life and soul at that time was Mr. (afterwards Sir A.) Chaudhuri. I was asked by Mr. Chaudhuri to attend these conferences. I said it was not necessary, as the arrangements were in such excellent hands. I watched the proceedings as an interested spectator, eager to know and to help, but took no personal part or share in them.

I was under the impression, wholly unfounded, as the sequel proved, that the Government, as the result of these conferences, would bow to public opinion and withdraw from an untenable position. But this was not to be. Lord Curzon visited East Bengal, ostensibly with the object of ascertaining public opinion, but really to overawe it. He was so hopelessly out of touch with the new spirit that his own reactionary policy had helped to foster, that he thought that his presence would serve to bring the leaders of East Bengal round to his views. He was greatly mistaken. At Mymensingh he was the guest of the Maharaja Surya Kanto Acharya. Among the Zemindars of Bengal there never was a finer or a stronger personality. He received Lord Curzon with all the honours of princely hospitality; but he told him with quiet and dignified firmness that he would regard the Partition of Bengal as a grave disaster, and that he was opposed to it; and throughout he remained a prominent leader of the anti-Partition agitation.

It was in the course of this tour that the scheme of Partition underwent a further expansion. It was now proposed, and for the first time, to include the whole of North Bengal and the districts of Faridpore and Barisal in East Bengal, in the new and expanded project.

The revised scheme was conceived in secret, discussed in secret, and settled in secret, without the slightest hint to the public. The idea of submitting it to a representative conference was no longer followed. ‘The final scheme’ said Lord Morley from his place in Parliament, ‘was never submitted to the judgment of anybody in Bengal.’ And why not? What became of that pretended deference to public opinion, of the solicitude to consult it, so conspicuous in the early stages of the discussion, when the East Bengal leaders were invited to conferences at ‘Belvedere’ under the presidency of the Lieutenant-Governor?

The truth is that there never was any real desire to defer to public opinion and abide by its decision. Lord Curzon and Sir Andrew Fraser had hoped to persuade the leaders to acquiesce in their views; when they failed, they set public opinion at defiance, but not with the inborn courage of real statesmanship. For the scheme, as finally settled, was embodied in a secret despatch of which the public knew nothing. Indeed, so complete was the lull after Lord Curzon’s visit to East Bengal and before the storm actually burst, that the idea gained ground that the project of a partition had been abandoned. Had we the faintest idea of what had been secretly decided, a deputation would have gone to England along with the despatch, with a view to procuring the annulment of its recommendations. I would have gladly joined such a deputation.

It is abundantly clear from the despatch of the Secretary of State that he accepted the Partition of Bengal with hesitation, for he suggested an alternative scheme to afford relief to the administration by creating a province on the model of Sind in the Bombay Presidency; and when I had an interview with Mr. Brodrick in London in the summer of 1909 and we discussed the Partition of Bengal, he did not seek to justify it. It is my deliberate conviction that, but for the profound secrecy observed with regard to the final scheme, and our inaction owing to the absence of all information, the Partition of Bengal would not have been sanctioned by the Secretary of

State. A timely deputation to England would have sealed its fate. But it is no use speculating as to what might have been.

On July 20, 1905, the announcement was made that Bengal was to be partitioned, and the public were informed of the details of the Partition. For the first time they learnt that North Bengal with all its historic associations was to be separated from the old province. The announcement fell like a bomb-shell upon an astonished public. But in our bewilderment we did not lose our heads. We made up our minds to do all that lay in our power, with the aid of the constitutional means at our disposal, to reverse, or at any rate to obtain a modification of, the Partition.

We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked. We felt that the whole of our future was at stake, and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengalee-speaking population. Originally intended to meet administrative requirements, we felt that it had drawn to itself a political flavour and complexion, and, if allowed to be passed, it would be fatal to our political progress and to that close union between Hindus and Mohamedans upon which the prospects of Indian advancement so largely depended. For it was openly and officially given out that Eastern Bengal and Assam was to be a Mohamedan province, and that credal distinctions were to be recognized as the basis of the new policy to be adopted in the new province.

We lost no time in taking action. We held a conference at Maharaja Jotindra Mohon Tagore's palace at Pathuriaghatta. The Maharaja was present and took an active part in the deliberations. Among those who attended was Mr. H. E. A. Cotton, then practising as a barrister in Calcutta, and now President of the Bengal Legislative Council. He was in the deepest sympathy with the movement for the reversal of the Partition; so was Mr. Ratcliffe, Editor of the *Statesman*, and so was Mr. Fraser Blair, then Editor of the *Englishman*. Anglo-Indian opinion, which generally supports the official view of things, condemned the

partition through its accredited organs. The attitude, however, did not long continue; but that was the view of the Anglo-Indian Press in the early days of the anti-Partition agitation.

At the conference, it was decided that the Maharaja should send a telegram to the Viceroy praying for a consideration of the orders passed, and urging that, if the partition were unavoidable, owing to administrative reasons, the Bengalee-speaking population should form part and parcel of the same administration. It is significant that the form of partition that was subsequently adopted by Lord Hardinge's Government was definitely foreshadowed at this conference, and was embodied in the telegram despatched to the Viceroy.

To have divided Bengal into two provinces, keeping the Bengalee-speaking population together in one province, and the rest in the other, would have removed all administrative inconveniences, whatever they were, and gratified public opinion. But this would not suit Lord Curzon and his Government. For as we believed, there was an underlying political motive, which would not be satisfied with such a division of the province as was suggested by the Maharaja. Lord Hardinge's Government fell in with our views, but their policy and aims were different from those of Lord Curzon.

The Conference at the Maharaja's palace was followed by almost daily conferences held in the Indian Association Rooms or at the house of Maharaja Surya Kanto Acharya of Mymensingh. It was resolved to hold a public meeting at the Town Hall on August 7, a day that was destined to become famous in the history of the anti-Partition controversy. Letters were sent to the mofussil, inviting delegates to be present at the meeting. The response was unanimous and enthusiastic. My friend Babu Anath Bandhu Guha wrote to me from Mymensingh, requesting a postponement of the date of the meeting so as to give the mofussil people more time for organization; but, having regard to the strength of the feeling that had been roused, and the eagerness to fire the first shot without delay, I wrote back, after consulting friends, that time was an

important element, and that the first great demonstration should be held early, so as to give the movement a lead and a direction which would co-ordinate its future development and progress throughout the province.

The resolutions to be adopted at the meeting of August 7 were the subject of anxious and prolonged discussion at the various conferences, which were attended by leading men from East and North Bengal. It was felt that mere public meetings would be of no use. Lord Curzon's Government had shown a systematic disregard of public feeling, and had treated public demonstrations with undisguised contempt. Something more was necessary—something that would be a fitting embodiment of the intense feeling that lay behind the whole movement. I remember the various suggestions made at the meetings held almost daily in the rooms of the Indian Association. One of them was that we should resign all our honorary appointments, such as those of Honorary Magistrate, and membership of district boards and municipalities. The obvious objection to the resignation of our seats on the local bodies and the Magisterial Bench was that they afforded an opportunity of serving our countrymen, and that they were a source of local influence which would be useful in the coming struggle. Further, it was doubtful whether the whole country would be with us, in such a view. A partial failure on the threshold of a great controversy would be disastrous, and the idea was therefore abandoned.\*

\*Source: S.N., Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, (Calcutta, 1963) pp. 170-175.

## Surendranath Banerjea on the Boycott and ‘Swadeshi’ Movement

While these discussions were in Progress, the idea of what was afterwards called the ‘Boycott Movement’ was in the air, and thrust itself into prominence in our deliberations. Much has been written and said about its genesis. From whose fertile brain did it spring—when did it first see the light? Both these questions it would be difficult to answer with anything like accuracy. When the public has been roused by any stirring event, its hidden springs touched, and its slumbering forces set in motion by some great calamity or by the passionate desire to work out a cherished ideal, promising to unfold a new chapter in a nation’s history, the moral atmosphere becomes fruitful under the pressure of new ideas; for the mind of the whole community is at work and makes its contribution to the sum total national thought.

In ‘my younger days, I had read Macaulay’s graphic account of the condition of English society on the eve of the Civil War between Charles I and his Parliament—how the coming struggle over-shadowed all other considerations, how it penetrated the homes of England and became the subject of conversation round every fireplace, how it leavened thought and moulded aspirations. Something of the same absorbing interest

was roused by Lord Curzon's Partition of Bengal. The whole community felt a concern about a matter affecting their province such as they had never experienced before. The community was writhing under a sense of surprise and indignation, accentuated by the farce of a conference at 'Belvedere', with its seeming deference to public opinion. It was in this state of the public mind that the idea of a boycott of British goods was publicly started—by whom I can not say—by several, I think, at one and the same time. It first found expression at a public meeting in the district of Pabna, and it was repeated at public meetings held in other mofussil towns; and the successful boycott of American goods by the Chinese was proclaimed throughout Asia and reproduced in the Indian newspapers.

The feeling was further emphasized by the stirring of an industrial movement that was beginning to fasten its hold on the public mind. The *Swadeshi* movement had already come into existence. At any rate *Swadeshi* spirit was abroad. It was in the air. There was a growing party among the educated community who espoused it. Our industrial helplessness was attracting attention in an increasing measure; and it was readily perceived that the boycott would be a double-edged weapon, industrial and political, in its scope and character.

The idea of a boycott was anxiously discussed for days together at our conferences. There was, as the result of these discussions, a pretty general unanimity of feeling amongst us. It was recognized that in the state of public feeling which then prevailed the movement would meet with general support; and the result fully justified this anticipation.

The only objection that was felt and seriously discussed was, how it would affect our English friends. Would they approve of it? Would they sympathize with it? Might they not regard it as an open avowal of ill will? For, as I have already observed, there were many Englishmen in Calcutta who strongly disapproved of the Partition, and of the form and the manner in which it was carried out. They were helping us

with their advice and the weight of their moral support. We were anxious that we should do nothing to alienate them, and that we should continue to receive their sympathy, which proved so helpful. Further, our appeal lay to the British public against the decision of the Government of India. We knew that Lord Curzon and the India Office would do all that lay in their power to prevent a revision of the orders passed. We felt some doubt as to how the movement would be viewed by the British public.

Thus the movement was not anti-British in its origin, nor even in its subsequent developments, though our official critics tried to make out that it was so; and we wanted to know what the British standpoint was likely to be, from Englishmen who might be presumed to be in closer touch than we could be with the temper and opinion of their countrymen at home. How foolish it would have been to have made an appeal to the British public for the reversal of an order of the Government of India by starting an anti-British movement! The organizers of the movement were presumably men of common sense, and they were not going to begin business by an act of folly that would make the British public turn a deaf ear to their appeals.

The terms of the resolution on the subject adopted at the Town Hall meeting demonstrated their anxiety to proceed with caution and care, and to offend no interest that might be enlisted in their favour. I was commissioned to consult some English friends as to whether they would advise such a resolution and what should be its form. As the communications were confidential, it would not be right to disclose their names even at this distance of time. But, one and all without a single exception, they advised the adoption of the course that had been suggested. A final conference was held at the house of Maharaja Surya Kanto Acharya of Mymensingh, when it was definitely decided to accept the following resolution:

‘That this meeting fully sympathizes with the resolution adopted at many meetings held in the mofussil to abstain from the purchase of British manufacturers so long as

the Partition Resolution is not withdrawn, as a protest against the indifference of the British public in regard to Indian affairs and the consequent disregard of Indian public opinion by the present Government.'

It will thus be seen that the boycott was a temporary measure adopted for a particular object, and was to be given up as soon as that object was attained. Its only aim and purpose was to call the attention of the British public to Bengal's great grievance, and, when the partition was modified and the grievance was removed, the boycott was to cease. That pledge was redeemed.

That the boycott sometimes led to excesses no one will dispute; but all constitutional movements suffer from this inherent weakness, which springs from the defects of our common human nature. All causes—the purest and the noblest—will have their moderates and their extremists. But the excesses, more or less incidental to all constitutional movements, have never been held as an argument against the adoption of constitutional methods for the redress of public grievances. If such a view were held, some of the noblest chapters of human history would have been left unwritten, and we should have been without the inspiration of self-sacrifice and patriotic devotion, which have so often been associated with the struggle for constitutional freedom. Who will say that because there is unhappily a revolutionary propaganda in Bengal, undoubtedly limited and insignificant in the circle of its influence, all constitutional efforts should be given up? The enemies of Indian advancement would wish for nothing better. The friends of Indian progress would view it as a calamity.

The Boycott Resolution was entrusted to Babu Narendranath Sen. It would have been impossible to have found among the ranks of Bengal leaders one who by his moderation and patriotism was so well qualified for the task. Babu Narendranath Sen was then at the height of his fame and influence. He was the editor of the *Indian Mirror*, the only daily newspaper at the time in Bengal under Indian

management and control. He had long fought the battles of his country with constancy and courage, and his character for sobriety and self-restraint made him respected even by those who did not view Indian aspirations with a friendly eye. It were much to be wished that to the last he had maintained his hold over the affections of his countrymen. But, alas! the closing chapters of his life dimmed the lustre of that great popularity which at one time made him a power in the counsels of his countrymen. The unhappy anarchical developments in Bengal somewhat unhinged a temperament in which the emotions played so prominent a part. He viewed them with concern and dismay, and this champion of a free Press went so far, in his solicitude to support the authorities, as to consent to receive a subsidy from the State for the publication of a vernacular newspaper.

It was an un-English and unwise policy for the Government to pursue, for such a paper could command no influence; but it was a matter of national regret that Babu Narendranath Sen should have lent the weight of his name and influence in support of a journalistic enterprise that was so thoroughly condemned by his countrymen. This, however, was the solitary flaw in a career of exceptional brilliancy and usefulness; and the historian of our times will accord to Narendranath Sen his rightful place among contemporaries, as a fearless champion of the public interests, and a warm and devoted worker in the cause of Indian progress. If his wary footsteps gave way in a position of exceptional difficulty, who amongst us is so blameless, so far removed from human failings, that he can afford to throw the first stone at him?

I remember Narendranath Sen in the days of his sturdy manhood; when age and disappointment had not worked their havoc upon his noble temperament, when he was the terror of evil-doers, and when the enemies of his country shrank from his virile presence. I saw him the day before his death. It was a hot day in August; Narendranath Sen lay prostrate on his bed. He was weak, scarcely able to speak, but still in full possession of his faculties. Not a word passed between him

and me. We exchanged glances. He looked at me with a look on which, as it seemed to me, were imprinted the memories of the past. Tears flowed down his cheeks. I returned the sad and loving glance, my eyes dim with tears, which I tried to check as best as I could, amid the grim surroundings of that chamber of death. I came away with a heavy heart, feeling that my honoured colleagues were one by one passing away, leaving 'the world to darkness and to me'.

It is worthy of remark that the Boycott Resolution did not elicit any marked sense of disapproval from the European Press, certainly not the strong resentment that it subsequently provoked. All that the *Englishman* newspaper said about it was that 'the policy of boycott must considerably embitter the controversy if it is successful, while in the opposite event it will render the movement and its supporters absurd'. The *Statesman* was inclined to ridicule the whole movement, but there was not a trace of any resentment on the ground that an anti-British agitation had been inaugurated.

'Those who were responsible for the Boycott Resolution (said the *Statesman*) have doubtless been fired by the example of the Chinese, and they are optimistic enough to assume that a boycott of European goods could be made as effective and as effective and as damaging as the Chinese boycott of American goods has to all appearance been. The assumption will cause a smile on the European side for more reasons than one. But all the same it would be unwise for the Government to assume that the whole movement is mere froth and insincerity. On the contrary, it has been apparent for some time past that the people of the province are learning other and more powerful methods of protest. The Government will recognize the new note of practicality which the present situation has brought into political agitation.'

I have dwelt at some length on the attitude of Anglo-Indian opinion with regard to the Boycott Resolution, in order to indicate that the subsequent change that took place was but the reflex of the official bitterness which the success of the

movement evoked. Bureaucracy is always unequal to a new situation or to an unexpected development. So long as things go on in the normal groove, bureaucracy, deriving its light and leading from precedent and from ancient and dust-laden files, feels happy and confident. But when the clouds appear on the horizon and when there is the ominous presage of stormy weather ahead, the bureaucratic mind feels restive; the files afford no guidance; the bureaucrat is disturbed; he loses his equanimity; his uneasiness slides into resentment; and, imagining dangers where there are none, he adopts heroic measures, which engender the very troubles that wiser and more pacific counsels would have averted.

A boycott movement in India had never before been thought of or attempted. It was a bold conception; and the first impulse of all spectators, as in the case of the *Statesman*, was to treat it with ridicule. But the success that it soon attained disclosed the volume of public sentiment that was behind it. Without a more or less universal feeling supporting it, the boycott was bound to fail. Its success was a revelation to all; it outstripped the anticipations of its inaugurators. But the bureaucracy in those days would learn nothing that was not in its files and was not consecrated by the dust of the Secretariat shelves. It was amazed at the ebullition of public feeling—it was indignant—it lost all self-control; it sought to repress where tactful handling and conciliatory measures would have been more effective, and it thus added to the intensity of the flame.

The course of events during the whole of the controversy in connexion with the Partition of Bengal bears out what I have just observed. There was throughout a persistent attempt to suppress the expression of public feeling in the name of law and order; and, as always happens in such cases, the attempt at repression recoiled upon its authors. More repressive measures were requisitioned; and the more signally did they fail; and the public excitement and unrest grew apace.

Undoubtedly the student community were deeply moved, and in the exuberance of their zeal they were sometimes

betrayed into excesses. When a great impulse stirs the heart of a community it is the young and impressionable who feel the full impact of the rising tide. At all times and in all ages it is to the young that the preachers of new movements have addressed themselves. 'Suffer little children to come unto me' were the words of the divinely-inspired Founder of Christianity. In Greece, in Italy, in America, in Germany, all over the world, when a new gospel was preached, charged with the message of a new hope, it was the young who enthusiastically responded to the call.

I appealed to the young to help us in the great national movement. I knew how deeply they were stirred when I was sent to prison for contempt of court, and I felt that they would help to create a body of public opinion without which we could not hope to succeed. I addressed them at numerous public meetings, and warm was the response. It had its roots in economic rather than in political causes. The Partition had indeed moved their deepest feelings, but they were more concerned with the spread of the *Swadeshi* movement than with the political propaganda that sought to reverse the Partition of Bengal.

Their enthusiasm was roused to a pitch such as I had never before witnessed. It was positively dangerous for a schoolboy or a college student to appear in a class or lecture room in clothes made of a foreign stuff. The students would not submit to exercise books being circulated for their class examinations with paper that had been manufactured abroad. I remember a schoolboy appearing in the fourth form of the Ripon Collegiate School with a shirt made of foreign cloth. As soon as the discovery was made, the shirt was torn off his back, and he narrowly escaped lynching. Let me here relate one more incident of a similar character. At an examination of the Ripon College students, the college authorities supplied foreign-manufactured paper upon which the answers were to be written. The students in a body refused to touch the blank books that were supplied. So strong was the feeling that it was thought not safe to ignore it. Country-made paper had

to be substituted, and the examination then proceeded in the usual way.

It was the fervour of the students that communicated itself to the whole community and inspired it with an impulse, the like of which had never been felt before. It was a strange upheaval of public feeling. The *Swadeshi* movement invaded our homes and captured the hearts of our women-folk, who were even more enthusiastic than the men. A granddaughter of mine, then only five years old, returned a pair of shoes that had been sent to her by a relative, because they were of foreign make. The air was surcharged with the *Swadeshi* spirit, and it is no exaggeration to, say that our young men were the creators of this stupendous moral change.

I have not witnessed a revolution in my time, nor by an effort of the imagination can I conceive what it is like. But, amid the upheaval of the *Swadeshi* movement, I could, I think, obtain some idea of the transformation of public feeling and of the wild excitement which must precede a revolutionary movement. A strange atmosphere is created. Young and old, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, all breathe it, and all are swayed and moved and even transported by the invisible influence that is felt. Reason halts; judgment is held in suspense; it is one mighty impulse that moves the heart of the community and carries everything before it. An eminent doctor told me that in the height of the *Swadeshi* movement a girl-patient of his, not more than six years old, cried out in her delirium that she would not take any foreign medicine.

How was it that every one was so moved? The visible and outward conditions do not suffice to explain it. But after all, the element of mystery, if there is any, vanishes before the gaze of the earnest student of history. The *Swadeshi* movement did not come into birth with the agitation for the reversal of the Partition of Bengal. It was synchronous with the national awakening which the political movement in Bengal had created.

The human mind is not divided into watertight compartments, but is a living organism; and, when a new impulse is felt in one particular direction, it affects the whole organism and is manifest throughout the entire sphere of human activities. When the Congress movement was started in the early eighties of the last century it was, and is even now, a common enough remark among a certain class of writers, perhaps not friendly to Indian interests, that it would have been far better, and a more natural course, to have commenced with the vital problems of social reform than with political considerations, which might have been more usefully dealt with later on, after our social and domestic institutions had been placed on a better and more satisfactory footing. The whole course of our national evolution has belied this confident assertion. Social reform, industrial revival, moral and spiritual uplift, have all followed in the track of the great national awakening, which had its roots in the political activities of our leaders. Once again the truth was established, that all reforms are inter-linked and inter-dependent, and that they act and react upon one another, and strengthen one another by their mutual interaction. The activities of Iswar Chunder Vidyasagar helped Keshub Chunder Sen by enabling him to appeal to instincts and tendencies broadened by the spirit of reform. His work, in its turn, helped that of Kristo Das Pal and others; and the new school of politicians, fresh from their contact with the West, familiar with Western methods and imbued with the Western spirit, left the beaten track and extended the scope of their work by direct appeals to the educated community and even to the masses. The new ideals and the new methods moved the people, and imparted to them an impulse that bore fruit in the manifold activities of an awakened national life.

Industrial revival followed as a matter of course, and devoted men, instinct with the new spirit, applied themselves to the development of our indigenous industries. One of the earliest pioneers in this field was Jogesh Chunder Chaudhuri. He belonged to a highly capable family, one of the members of which, Sir Ashutosh Chaudhuri, became a Judge of the High Court of Calcutta. Mr. Jogesh Chunder Chaudhuri is a

member of the Calcutta High Court Bar, and is the founder of the *Weekly Notes*, a law journal which has a recognized and authoritative place among legal publications. But he is no mere lawyer; and the development of the indigenous industries of his country had an irresistible fascination for him. He it was who first started an Industrial Exhibition of *Swadeshi* articles as an annexe to the Indian National Congress. That was in 1826, and a similar exhibition on a much larger scale was again held under his management in 1896, in connexion with the Calcutta Congress of that year.

Thus when the anti-Partition controversy arose, the ground for a *Swadeshi* movement had already been prepared, and the political enthusiasm of our people was linked with the fervour to uplift our industrial status. The *Swadeshi* movement was in spirit a protectionist movement. Only, as we had not the power to make laws, which was in hands other than our own, we sought to surround our domestic industries with a tariff wall not raised by the mandate of the legislature, but by the determined will of our people. Such a movement could only succeed among a highly emotional people, swayed by an impulse that was universal.

The European Press viewed the whole thing as a huge mistake, and was confident that it would soon disappear as a nine days' wonder. That it lasted much longer and was in fairly vigorous operation during the six years that the Partition was in force, was the wonder of foreign visitors, accustomed to the economic conditions prevalent in the Western world. That the people of Bengal should continue, and that for several years, to purchase home-made things at a higher price when similar or even superior articles, imported from foreign countries, could be had cheaper, was a striking testimony to their devotion and self-sacrificing spirit. In this they have never been wanting when the occasion required it, but to this quality, I fear, justice has not always been done.

A powerful, overwhelming impulse soon breaks its prescribed bounds and penetrates into the many-sided relations of life. It soon becomes a social force. Swadeshism during the

days of its potency coloured the entire texture of our social and domestic life. Marriage presents that included foreign goods, the like of which could be manufactured at home, were returned. Priests would often decline to officiate at ceremonies where foreign articles were offered as oblations to the gods. Guests would refuse to participate in festivities where foreign salt or foreign sugar was used. So great was the pressure of public opinion that no Bengalee would think of purchasing a foreign-made *dhoti* or *saree*; and, if he wanted to do so for its cheapness, it had to be done during the hours of darkness, when no eyes would watch him, or, if watched, he would, elude observation under the friendly covering of night.\*

\*Source : S.N., Banerjea, A Nation in Making, pp. 176-185.

## Surendranath Banerjea on Swadeshim and ‘Bande-Mataram’

We have heard a great deal about the Non-Co-operation movement. To-day the vernacular Press is far more widespread in its influence than it was at the time of the *Swadeshi* movement; and the vernacular Press in its utterances distinctly leans towards Non-Co-operation. But the truth cannot be gainsaid that Non-Co-operation is nowhere as compared to the influence that Swadeshism exercised over our homes and our domestic life. Non-Co-operation, even in its strongest centres (and they are not many in Bengal), is not a social force, such as Swadeshism was in the days of its power and influence. There are innumerable villages in Bengal where the *charka* and the *khaddar* are unknown. I wish it were otherwise; but the truth must be stated. An industrial movement linked with a political controversy may receive a momentary impulse which may send it far forward, but in the long run it suffers by such association. An industry must be conducted on business lines; and business considerations must, in the long run, guide and dominate its course and progress. Capital, organization and expert knowledge—these constitute the basic foundations of an industrial enterprise. A patriotic impulse will certainly help it; but only for a time, and will cease to be operative when normal conditions are restored.

It is sometimes said that our public movements are soulless, and that they are so because we do not always take the masses of our people with us. This is perhaps neither the time nor the place to discuss this question. The masses do not actively associate themselves with any public movement unless their own particular interests are vitally concerned. All great movements originate with and are guided and controlled by, the intellectual leaders of the community, the masses more or less sympathizing with them and lending them the weight of their moral support. They are vocal only on great occasions, demonstrative and sometimes uncontrollable when their deeper feelings have been roused, and the memories of past wrongs, or the sense of present oppression, are kindled in their breasts. The *Swadeshi* movement appealed to their personal interests. They had sense enough to perceive that the movement, if successful, would herald the dawn of a new era of material prosperity for them.

When I entered public life nearly fifty years ago, I had three ideals, which have never failed to inspire me, and to which I always, amid the many vicissitudes of my political life, endeavoured, according to my opportunities, to give effect. They were : (1) The unification of the various Indian peoples upon a common platform for the advancement of our common political interests; (2) the establishment of friendly and fraternal relations between Hindus and Mohamedans as the first indispensable condition of Indian progress; and (3) the uplifting of the masses and their association with us in our public movements. It was for the realization of the first two of these ideals that I toured all over India in 1876 and 1877, spoke upon the question of Indian unity at numerous public meetings, and sought to unite all India in a common demand for the redress of a great national grievance. To me the *Swadeshi* movement opened out a splendid opportunity for the realization of one of the ideals of my life, and I embraced it with alacrity and enthusiasm.

*Swadeshi* meetings were held all over the country, even in places beyond our own province. I was present addressing as

many meetings (mostly in Bengalee) and in as many places as I could, and as my health and strength would permit. It was a time of unusual excitement and strenuous work. None spared himself. Every one did his best. We travelled to places strange and unknown, often difficult of access. We ate strange food. We minded nothing. We complained of nothing. We put up with the severest hardships and inconveniences in our journeys to distant places. We faced the risks of malaria and cholera. Our enthusiasm was our protection. Our faith in our immunity from danger and disease was a moral inoculation that never failed.

There was one comrade to whom I cannot help referring in this connexion, and I do so all the more readily, as he has long been lost to us. I mean Pundit Kali Prosanna Kabyavisarad, editor of the *Hitabadi* newspaper. In ill-health, suffering from a fatal ailment (Bright's disease), he was present at every *Swadeshi* meeting to which he was invited. He introduced a new element into the *Swadeshi* meetings, which is now largely employed in our public demonstrations. They usually begin with some patriotic song, appropriate to the occasion. Kabyavisarad had a fine musical talent. He himself could not sing, but he composed songs of exquisite beauty, which were sung at the *Swadeshi* meetings and never failed to produce a profound impression. He had a natural gift for musical composition, and, though he had an imperfect knowledge of Hindi, his Hindi song (*Deshki e kaya halat*) was one of the most impressive of its kind. It was a fierce denunciation of the passion for foreign goods in preference to domestic articles, and, when it was sung at the great Congress at Calcutta in 1906, attended by thousands of our people, it threw the whole audience into a state of wild excitement.

Kabyavisarad was always attended by two musical experts, who opened and closed the proceedings of *Swadeshi* meetings with their songs. They were taught, paid and maintained by him; and, though by no means rich, he sought no extraneous assistance for their upkeep. He was not much of a speaker, but as a writer he was the master of a vigorous and caustic

style which he ruthlessly employed against the enemies of Indian advancement. A devoted patriot, he never spared himself in the service of the motherland; and I remember his attending the Lucknow Congress of 1899, with fever on him, and a warrant in a defamation case hanging over him. He was reckless of health and life; strong-willed, and even obstinate, above all advice and remonstrance. He was rapidly sinking into his grave. Those near and dear to him thought that the best way to improve his health and to save him from the consequences of his fanatical devotion to the *Swadeshi* cause was to send him away from the scene of his loved labours. A friend was going to Japan as a doctor on board a passenger ship; and his relations persuaded Kabyavisarad to accompany him, believing that rest and sea-voyage would do him good. Somehow the idea never found favour with me. A presentiment haunted me. Possibly public considerations were working in the inner depths of my consciousness, and coloured my judgment. However that may be, I tried to dissuade Kabyavisarad. He called me his political *guru*; but so did many others without his fervour or devotion, and who are too ready to sling mud at their *guru*. He at one time made up his mind not to go, but at last yielded to pressure. He took leave of me in front of the Howrah railway station, as we returned from a *Swadeshi* meeting at Mugkalyan on the Bengal-Nagpur line; a few miles from Calcutta. He took the dust of my feet. I blessed him. Alas! we were destined never to meet again, for he died at sea on the return voyage.

Thus was lost to Bengal one of the ablest and most patriotic journalists, who wielded the resources of our language with a power that made him the terror of his enemies and of the enemies of his country. He was not indeed above personalities, the bane of a species of vernacular journalism from which unhappily we have not yet emerged; and some of his sallies into the domain of domestic sanctities we must all deplore and condemn. But his fiercest personal attacks were directed against the enemies of Indian advancement, too often masquerading in the guise of friends and well-wishers. The news of his death was received in Calcutta on July 7, 1907; and

when, a fortnight later, the District Conference of the 24-Parganas was held at Baraset, and the proceedings were opened with his *Swadeshi* songs, there were few in that audience who could withhold the tribute of their tears to the memory of one who, despite his faults and failings—and he had many—served his country with fidelity and devotion, and with a courage that never flinched,

But though a great *Swadeshi* worker had passed away, the cause did not suffer. All great movements, however much they may be indebted to personal initiative and genius, are largely independent of even commanding personalities. These sow the seeds, which fructify in the birth of men who, though not always their equals, are yet capable of bearing their burden and carrying on their work. Kabyavisarad's enthusiasm was but a reflex of the fervour that was so widely prevalent.

The Government was alarmed at the upheaval of public feeling, and it adopted the familiar methods of repression, which only served to stimulate such feeling. Agricola is reported by Tacitus to have made the shrewd observation that the government of a household is more difficult than that of an empire. When an explosion takes place in a family, the healing influences of time and good sense, aided by friendly counsels, help to bring things to their normal condition; and generally they are found to be effective. But a bureaucracy armed with omnipotent power is tempted to follow short cuts dealing with an unforeseen situation. Repression is handy and promises to be effective. The heavy price that has to be paid, the disastrous moral result that it produces in the long run, are lost sight of in the eager desire to do the thing quickly. Temporary success is perhaps achieved, but permanent injury is done, and the seeds of future troubles are sown.

The students, as I have already observed, and young men who were not students, had taken a prominent part in the *Swadeshi* movement. Their zeal had fired the whole community. They had become the self-appointed missionaries of the cause. It was thought necessary to curb and control their

activities. A circular was accordingly issued by District Magistrates to heads of educational institutions, in which they were told that unless the school and college authorities and teachers prevented their pupils from taking public action in connexion with boycotting, picketing and other abuses associated with the so-called *Swadeshi* movement, the schools and colleges would forfeit their grants-in-aid and the privilege of competing for scholarships, and the University would be asked to disaffiliate them. The circular was addressed to schools in the mofussil.

The circular made a distinction between students in Calcutta and those in the mofussil, but the Calcutta boys were just as enthusiastic in the *Swadeshi* cause as their mofussil brothers. Day after day, during the height of the excitement, a number of students used to stand at the corner of the Maidan, watching those who entered Whiteaway, Laidlaw's premises, begging Indians not to purchase foreign goods, or, if the purchase had been made, appealing to them not to repeat their offence. It was reported to me at the time, that some of these young men threw themselves at the feet of a fashionable Bengalee lady, as she was coming out of Whiteaway, Laidlaw's shop, and begged of her to promise not to purchase foreign goods when similar home-made articles were available.

The circular only served to add to the excitement, and it evoked universal condemnation even among organs of opinion that usually supported the policy and measures of Government. *Statesman* newspaper, commenting upon the circular, used language that the *Statesman* has since banished from its columns, except when, denouncing really bad measures. 'We should really like to know' exclaimed the *Statesman*, 'the name of the imbecile official at whose instance the Lieutenant-Governor sanctioned this order. The Government, there can be no doubt added the same authority, 'has been misled by some person who is either grossly ignorant of the situation, or has allowed himself to be frightened by the fantastic scares of the last few weeks'; and the paper concluded by observing, 'Government has blundered apparently into a childish and

futile policy which can only have the effect of manufacturing an army of martyrs'. That was the language of a leading English newspaper when the first circular of a restrictive character was issued affecting students. But circular after circular followed, each one adding to the prevailing excitement, and aggravating the evil which it was intended to cure.

The *Bande-Mataram* circular was one of them. It was issued by the new Government of Eastern Bengal, and it declared the shouting of *Bande-Mataram* in the public streets to be illegal ; and an authority in the person of a high European official, supposed to be versed in the ancient lore of our country, was found, who went so far as to assert that it was an invocation to the goddess Kali for vengeance. Where he got this idea from it is difficult to know. The opening lines of the *Bande-Mataram* are the words of a song, full of love for, and devotion to, the motherland, expatiating upon her beauty and her strength. 'I salute the mother, the mother of us all, namely the motherland'—that is the plain meaning of the words. But amid the excitement which prevailed in official circles a sinister meaning was read into this very innocent formula, and a circular was issued by the Government of East Bengal suppressing the cry in the streets. We took legal opinion, and the legal opinion (that of Mr. Pugh, an eminent advocate of the Calcutta Bar) was in our favour, and against the legality of the circular.

At the Barisal Conference the cry had an almost historic bearing, to which I shall refer later on. In the meantime let me thankfully note that the official angle of vision has, in this respect, undergone a change, and the national standpoint has been accepted. At one of the recruiting meetings that I attended in North Bengal, I saw British officers standing up with the rest of the audience as the great national song was sung, and soldiers of the Bengalee regiment, wearing the King's uniform, were received by their countrymen, in the numerous towns that they visited, with shouts of *Bande-Mataram* ! And when they spoke at the recruiting meetings, some of them declared within the hearing, and with the full approval, of their officers that

nothing, would give them greater pleasure, or fill them with more patriotic pride, than to attack the German trenches with the cry of *Bande-Mataram* on their lips.

The cry, at one time banned and barred and suppressed, has become pan-Indian and national, and is on the lips of an educated Indian when on any public occasion he is moved by patriotic fervour to give expression to his feeling of joy. What is equally important to note is that it is no longer regarded by officials as the rallying cry of seditious men, intent on breaking the peace or on creating a disturbance.

The song of which '*Bande-Mataram*' are the opening words occurs in Bankim Chunder Chatterjee's well-known novel, *Anandamatha*. It is a Bengalee song, but so rich in Sanskrit vocabulary that it is understood in every part of India by educated men. Its stately diction, its fine musical rhythm, its earnest patriotism, have raised it to the status and dignity of a national song, and it forms a fitting prelude to the business of great national gatherings. Bankim Chunder Chatterjee could hardly have anticipated the part which it was destined to play in the *Swadeshi* movement, or the assured place it was to occupy in all national demonstrations. Dante, when he sang of Italian unity, had no conception of the practical use to which his song would be put by Mazzini and Garibaldi, or the part it would play in the political evolution of the Italian people. Men of genius scatter their ideals broadcast. Some of them fall on congenial soil. Time and the forces of Time nurse them. They ripen into an abundant harvest fraught with unspeakable good to future generations.\*

## Surendranath Banerjea on the By-issues of the ‘Swadeshi’ Movement

The Swadeshi movement gave an impetus to all our activities, literary, political and industrial. Literature felt the full impact of the rising tide of national sentiment, which bodied itself forth in prose and verse. Journalism received a stimulus such as it had not felt for a long time. The speeches made in Bengalee at *Swadeshi* meetings, under the inspiration of the new ideas, were models of eloquence and it is a pity they have not been preserved. Where do we see the like of it in the Non-Co-operation movement, at least in Bengal ? Where is the universal movement of uplift throbbing in the heart of the Bengalee, raising him to a higher plane of social and moral life ? Or where now do we find in literature or in journalism the inspiration of a patriotic impulse brushing aside all that is mean or contemptible or spiteful, leading national life up-wards and onwards towards the fulfilment of a nobler destiny ? We see none of it. It is all words from start to finish, or ill will and hatred, robed in the garb of patriotism. Or at the best, it is separation, isolation from the larger interests of humanity. As a nation we are to live, prosper and flourish, by detachment from the wider concerns of mankind. The sap that feeds humanity is to be cut off from us, and we are to flow down

the stream of life, unfed, unsupported by the culture, the art and the civilization of the rest of mankind, rejoicing in our isolation, taking pride in our aloofness. To me the thought is intolerable. It must stunt our national growth, make us dwarfs where others are giants.

But let me pass on from these reflections, and dwell upon the many-sided development of the *Swadeshi* movement in the zenith of its influence. It is, however, in the industrial line that the national activities received an unprecedented stimulus. Soap and match factories and cotton mills were started one after another. The weaving industry received an impetus all its own. The weavers were a dying class ; Manchester goods had killed their trade. But now there was a revival. I went to Haripal in the Hughli district to attend a *Swadeshi* meeting. The weavers who were there in large numbers blessed us. The neatness and tidiness of their homes, which we visited, bore evidence of their revived prosperity. So it was all over the country ; and the official reports testified to the fact. But in the wild enthusiasm of the hour and the eager desire to help forward our domestic industries, the preliminaries of organization were not always carefully thought out, and the need of expert knowledge was not sufficiently attended to. Capital flowed in, but capital was not always wisely employed. Failures followed, and they served to damp the *Swadeshi* spirit.

It must be regretfully noted that the Government did not take advantage of the opportunity to assist the movement. If it had placed itself at the head, and by wise guidance had led the movement into fruitful channels, it would have softened the acerbities of the political situation created by its own action, and would have taken a long step forward towards the solution of the industrial problem. But the political leaven of the *Swadeshi* movement probably determined the attitude of the Government, which was one of indifference and even of hostility. Boys were punished for boyish excesses, and quite a youthful army of martyrs was created. The seeds were thus sown of youthful dissatisfaction, which were destined to bear bitter fruits in the not very distant future, in the unhappy anarchical

developments, of which, I am sorry to say, we have not yet seen the last.

But, despite the excesses of our boys and the repressive methods pursued, the *Swadeshi* movement made steady headway. Throughout, the dominating idea was to be independent of Manchester and of the foreign market for our ordinary wearing apparel, our *dhoties* and *sarees*. Bombay was partly supplying them; and the Bombay cotton mills had a highly prosperous time during the height of the *Swadeshi* movement. But it was felt that Bengal might, to some extent, supply her own needs. There was a cotton mill at Serampore on the Hugli, which had now been in existence for some time. It was resolved to buy up this mill and to extend its operations. A sum of eighteen lakhs of rupees was needed. An appeal was issued. I was one of the signatories. The money was easily found, being largely subscribed by our middle class people and even by our women-folk. The mill was purchased, extended and re-named. It was called the 'Banga Luxmi Mill', as a compliment to the gentler sex, who had shown a practical interest in the concern. The mill has had a chequered history. It had its ups and downs. We have to pay for our experience. This we have done, and we have gathered wisdom which I have no doubt will prove valuable. The mill has now entered upon a new career, and I hope it will be one of increasing prosperity.

From the very outset of the *Swadeshi* movement, it had been felt that banking facilities were indispensably necessary for the development of our industries. It was a matter of complaint that the banks under European management did not afford the requisite help to Indian concerns, and it was felt that we should have a bank of our own. Accordingly, the Bengal National Bank was started under an Indian directorate and Indian control and management. Its history shows that in Bengal Indian banking concerns may prove successful. But, like the Banga Luxmi Cotton Mill, it has had its vicissitudes; it was confronted with a crisis, which happily is now over.

The *Swadeshi* movement also gave a stimulus to the inauguration of insurance companies under Indian management.

I had ventured to suggest, in one of my speeches on the anniversary of what is called the Boycott Movement, that this was a direction in which we might usefully employ our energies. The suggestion was taken up, and several insurance companies were started, of which the National and the Hindusthan Co-operative Insurance Companies are the best known and the most successful.

The *Swadeshi* movement was inaugurated on August 7, along with the first demonstration against the Partition of Bengal. The demonstration was an historic one. The young men of Calcutta marched in solemn procession from College Square to the Town Hall under leadership of Mr. J. Chaudhuri. The Indian shops were all closed. The Indian part of the city had a deserted look. But all was life and animation in the vicinity of the Town Hall. A huge crowd had gathered. They came rushing up the steps, filling the upper and the lower hall, flowing out into the portico, and the grounds beyond. We decided to have three meetings, two in the Town Hall, upper and lower floor, and the third on the Maidan near the Bentinck Statue. I made the announcement from the steps of the Town Hall. It was received with enthusiasm, and the vast crowd moved away to arrange themselves for the three meetings. There was no disorder of any kind, no unseemly rushing to and fro. The discipline of our people at public meetings has always in recent years, except with the rise of Non-Co-operation, been admirable, and foreign visitors who have witnessed our great demonstrations have been struck by their orderliness and the readiness of our people, even in moments of excitement, to obey authority. It is some evidence of their fitness to manage their own affairs.

I spoke at all the three meetings ; the enthusiasm was unbounded, and I may here mention a little incident expressive of the prevailing *Swadeshi* feeling. It had been resolved to drape the upper floor of the Town Hall in black, as emblematic of the mournful occasion which had brought us together. An order to that effect was given to Messrs. Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Co., and it was duly carried out. Mr. Halim Ghaznavi came

to me on the morning of the day fixed for the meeting saying that if the black cloth, which was a foreign stuff, were not removed, he apprehended that there would be a disturbance. A hasty consultation was held, for there was not much time to lose ; and by the hour of the meeting the whole of the drapery had been removed. Feeling was running high, and we could not ignore it. We could not afford to have a schism in our camp at the start.

The ball was now set a-rolling. The success of the first demonstration inspired public confidence and stimulated the national enthusiasm. The meeting was representative of all Bengal, more representative than any in which I have had my part and share. Never was public sentiment so outraged as by the Partition of Bengal ; and Bengal, united and indivisible, thundered forth her protest through the mouths of her chosen representatives. The delegates who had attended the Calcutta meeting returned to their homes, fully resolved to continue the agitation against the Partition and in support of the *Swadeshi* cause. The two movements went hand in hand, and acted and reacted upon one other. The rising tide of the *Swadeshi* movement checked the import of Manchester goods, and Marwari merchants who dealt in them were alarmed. They made proposals to us with a view to facilitating the clearing off of the Manchester goods they had already in hand. We were willing to help them if they agreed not to import foreign goods beyond what they had already done. The negotiations were long and protracted, but they led to nothing.\*

\*Source : S.N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 193-196.

## Surendranath Banerjea on the Anti-partition Movement

In 1910, Lord Hardinge was appointed Viceroy in succession to Lord Minto. I met Lord Minto several times and had fairly long interviews with him. He was an English gentleman of a fine type. Fairly liberal in his sentiments, but I fear without any large power of initiative, his name will be remembered in Indian history as the joint author of the Morley-Minto Scheme; though Lord Morley's *Recollections* leave no doubt as to where the driving power lay. India owes to Lord Minto the system of communal representation for the Legislative Councils, from the meshes of which it will take her many long years to emerge. I had in one of my interviews a long conversation with him about the Partition of Bengal. He was frank and outspoken, but obdurate in his adhesion to the 'settled fact'. He said, 'Mr. Banerjea, if my country was divided in the way your province has been, I should feel just as you do.' He spoke his mind out, but he was powerless to help us in any way. When we formally waited upon him in deputation as members of the Indian Association with a request that the Partition should be modified, he repeated Lord Morley's formula and told us in reply that the Partition was a 'settled fact'.

Some of our friends in India thought that we should not have put forward the request for its modification, in view of the repeated pronouncements of the Secretary of State. Our friends in England, including Mr. W.C. Bonnerjea, who was then in London, were of a different opinion. Their view was that, having regard to the all-important character of the Partition question, it was our plain duty to give it a prominent place in an address to the Viceroy. To have omitted all reference to it on an occasion so important was to have relegated it to a secondary place among the public questions of the day. In any case, it was clear that Lord Minto would do nothing to modify the Partition. We thought it possible, though our experience of the past was not very encouraging, that Lord Hardinge might take a more favourable view.

Lord Hardinge came out to India as a comparative stranger. He was not in the ranks of English public life; diplomacy was his profession. The Indian public received the announcement of his appointment with mixed feelings. But, before twelve months had elapsed, we realized that he would take his place in the front rank of Indian Viceroys, by the side of Bentinck, Canning and Ripon.

A new Viceroy having assumed the reins of Government, we resolved to place him in possession of all the facts and the attitude of the Indian public in regard to the Partition question. We accordingly announced a public meeting to be held in the Town Hall of Calcutta early in January to consider it. Within a day or two of the announcement I received an urgent letter from Government House inviting me to see His Excellency the Viceroy the day after. I had never before been so summoned; but I guessed the purpose of the invitation. I thought it was the proposed Town Hall meeting about which His Excellency wished to have information. I was right in my anticipation. After the usual greetings, Lord Hardinge wanted to know why we had called the meeting. I said in reply, 'In order to acquaint your Excellency with the situation in Bengal relating to the Partition.' His Excellency's answer was : 'But that can be done by a memorial without a public meeting.' I said, 'If your

Excellency would look into the memorial personally and consult our leaders, the district leaders, there would be no reason for holding the public meeting.' His Excellency said he would do that and consult his officers. I said, 'My Lord, the officers of Government have again and again been consulted, and they have given their opinions. It is our leaders whose opinions should now be asked.' Lord Hardinge very kindly agreed; and the public meeting at the Town Hall was not held.

I drew up a memorial largely assisted by my esteemed friend, Babu Ambika Churn Majumder, the Grand Old Man of Faridpore, and sent it to the district leaders for signature by influential and representative men. My request was that the memorial was to be regarded as absolutely confidential, so that the other side under official inspirations might not set up a counter-agitation. My instructions were faithfully observed. The contents of the document never leaked out. In the district of Rajshahi, however, the District Superintendent of Police came to know that there was an anti-Partition memorial, which was being signed, and he wanted to have a copy of it. My friend, Babu Kissory Mohan Chowdhury, who was entrusted with the signature of the memorial in the district, asked for my instructions. I replied telling him that the document was confidential and was not to be shown to any one except the actual signatories.

We submitted this memorial, signed by representative men in eighteen out of the twenty-five districts of Bengal, about the end of June, 1911, and the Despatch of the Government of India recommending the modification of the Partition of Bengal was dated August 25, 1911; and some of the arguments that we urged in the memorial were accepted by the Government as valid reasons for the modification of the Partition, and were emphasized in the Despatch.

The Partition was modified on December 12, 1911, by the announcement made by His Majesty at Delhi. I had heard about it a week before; but from the general public and from the newspaper Press it was kept a secret. Indeed, the officials

and others most interested knew nothing at all about it until the actual announcement was made, and some of them were staggered at the news. Among them was the late Nawab Salimulla of Dacca, who was the Government's right-hand man in supporting the Partition and securing the assent of the Mohamedan community of East Bengal. He got a G.C.I.E. as a solace, but to the last he remained unconvinced and unreconciled. As a gentleman, the Nawab was without an equal. As a politician, he was narrow, but shrewd, with a fund of common sense that made him a tower of strength to his supporters and the Government.

In the meantime expectation ran high in Calcutta. All eyes were centred on the Durbar at Delhi. Some announcement was expected. The King had come out to India; the King was expected to do something beneficent and to appease the excitement and unrest in Bengal. Nothing definite was indeed known. But hope builds a pyramid upon a point. The *Bengalee* office was crowded with expectant visitors throughout the day, anxious to know the news from Delhi. The hours rolled by. Disappointment was visible on the countenances of the assembled visitors. It was late in the afternoon; but there was no news about the Partition. Late in the day, the Associated Press sent a message from Delhi, but it contained not a word about the Partition. There were friends sitting near me in my editorial room, eager and anxious, but growing despondent at the absence of all reference to the Partition in the last message from Delhi. I dictated an article, which was to appear the day after, expressing profound dissatisfaction at the Partition not being modified, at the same time urging our people not to lose heart, but to continue the agitation.

Having dictated the article and revised it, I went downstairs, preparing to leave office, when I was summoned back to the telephone and heard the news that the Partition had been modified. There was quite a crowd at the *Bengalee* office at the time. The news spread like wildfire. People came in throngs to the office. A huge gathering had assembled in College Square, and I was seized by my friends, put into a

carriage, and literally carried by force to College Square. There I witnessed a wild scene of excitement. It was quite dark—there were no lights—we could not see one another, but we could hear voices shouting with joy and occasionally interjecting questions. A voice from crowd cried out, ‘What do you think of the transfer of the capital to Delhi ?’ I said at once, ‘We are not likely to lose very much by it.’ Subsequent events have demonstrated that I was substantially right in my impromptu answer.

I returned home from the meeting happy at the thought that for six long years my friends and myself had not worked in vain, and that our efforts to restore to the Bengalee-speaking population their ancient union and solidarity were crowned with success. The secret is told in less than half-a-dozen words. We were persistent, we were confident of success; we religiously avoided unconstitutional methods and the wild hysterics that breed and stimulate them. Even when attacked by the police, we did not retaliate. We shouted *Bande-Mataram* at each stroke of the police *lathi*, and then appealed to the constituted courts of law for redress. Passive resistance we practised. Soul-force we believed in; but we never were under the delusion that it could be employed to any useful or national purpose, except by men trained in the practice of self-restraint and the discipline of public life. It is the acceptance of naked principles, without reference to the circumstances of their application, which is responsible for many of the deplorable events that have darkened the pages of recent Indian history.

It is a pity that the Partition of Bengal was not modified in 1906, when Mr. John Morley denounced it from his place in the House of Commons as ‘a measure which went wholly and decisively against the wishes of the majority of the people concerned’, at the same declaring it to be ‘a settled fact’. A ‘pronouncement in which the conclusion was so wholly inconsistent with the premises only served to add to the irritation and intensify the agitation. The Partition and the policy that was adopted to support it were the root cause of the anarchical movement in Bengal, and I have no doubt in my mind that, if

it had been modified just when the agitation was assuming a serious aspect and the whole country was seething with excitement, the history of Bengal, and possibly of India, would have been differently written, and our province would have been spared the taint of anarchism. Here again the psychological moment was allowed to pass by, and the modification came when it was overdue. The words, 'too late' were once more written on every line of British policy.

I cannot pass from the subject without referring to some of the prominent persons who took part in the anti-Partition and *Swadeshi* movement and shared its troubles and risks. Some of them are now dead. Among these may be mentioned Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose, Maharaja Surya Kanto Acharya Chowdhury of Mymensingh, Babu Ambika Churn Majumder and Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu. Of Ananda Mohan Bose and Bhupendra Nath Basu I have written elsewhere and in another connexion. Maharaja Surya Kanto Acharya Chowdhury, before the anti-Partition controversy, took little or no interest in politics. He was a man of wealth, and *shikar* was the pleasure and the passion of his life. He took to it far more seriously than many people take to their business. By nature he was an enthusiast, and, when his feelings were roused, he spared neither money nor pains to attain his object. For a man in his position, in those days, to stand up against the Government, in regard to a measure upon which it had set its heart, needed no little courage and strength of purpose. It was a much more serious affair than voting against Government in the Legislative Council. Lord Curzon undertook a tour in the eastern districts, and at Mymensingh, the Maharaja's headquarters, he became his guest. The Viceroy was treated with princely hospitality : but the Maharaja never flinched in maintaining an attitude of unbending opposition to the Partition of Bengal and frankly expressing his opinion to the Viceroy. That attitude was maintained by him throughout the whole of the controversy, and even in the darkest days of repression, when the leaders of the anti-Partition movement were, in the eyes of the authorities, so many political suspects.

I well remember his attending the first boycott meeting on August 7, 1905, dressed in the roughest *Swadeshi* garb, which alone was then available. It was in his house in Lower Circular Road that many of our meetings were held and many of the most momentous decisions taken. He died just on the eve of the deportations in Bengal, and there was some apprehension, not perhaps well-founded, that if he had lived he would have shared the fate of many of his friends and co-workers. His death has left a gap among the zemindars of East Bengal which has not been filled. For courage, virility and strength of purpose, he stood head and shoulders above the men of his class, and left behind him an enduring example for imitation and guidance.

Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal was another leader of East Bengal who came into prominence. He was a schoolmaster and proprietor of the Brojomohan College at Barisal. It was founded in honour of his father, as a memorial of filial piety, but it was Aswini Kumar Dutt's devotion and organizing powers that made it one of the most successful educational institutions in East Bengal or in the whole of province. Aided by Babu Satis Chunder Chatterjee, a colleague of his in the Brojomohan College, he organized the whole district for the *Swadeshi* movement. These organizations rendered splendid service; and when famine broke out in Barisal Mr. Dutt was able to afford substantial help to the sufferers. The relief of the famine-stricken and the spread of the *Swadeshi* cause went hand in hand.

Those were days of conflict and controversy between the officials and the representatives of the people; and Aswini Kumar Dutt and his friends in Barisal felt the full weight of official displeasure and all that it implied. In 1908, Mr. Dutt and his friend and lieutenant, Mr. Satis Chunder Chatterjee, were deported without a trial. The reasons for their deportation will possibly remain a state secret for many long years. But, apart from the general reasons that make deportations without trial repugnant to the ordinary canons of law and justice, it seemed extraordinary that men like Aswini Kumar

Dutt and Satis Chunder Chatterjee, who never harboured an unconstitutional idea or uttered an unconstitutional sentiment in their lives, should have been dealt in this way under an old and forgotten regulation, intended to be employed against quasi-rebels. The general impression at the time was that the authorities wanted to put down Swadeshism, and they sought to strike terror among *Swadeshi* workers by this extraordinary procedure adopted against some of their most prominent leaders. But repression did not kill Swadeshism. Its decline was largely due to the failure of many *Swadeshi* enterprises and the removal of the root cause by the modification of the Partition.

Babu Ananda Chunder Roy of Dacca must now claim attention as one of the outstanding figures of the anti-Partition movement. The undisputed leader of the Dacca Bar, Ananda Chunder Roy occupied a position of unrivalled influence among the Hindu leaders of that city; and the whole of that influence he exerted, and with conspicuous success, for the promotion of the *Swadeshi* movement and the modification of the Partition. It is no mean testimony to his public spirit and that of the Hindu citizens of Dacca that, for the sake of maintaining the solidarity of the Bengalee-speaking population: they strenuously opposed a scheme that would have made their city the capital of a new province, with all its attendant advantages. Ananda Chunder Roy was one of the stalwarts of the anti-Partition movement, and never faltered in his opposition to the Partition. In the same category must be placed Anath Bandhu Guha of Mymensingh. As head of the Mymensingh Bar, he wielded great influence. In those days to be a popular leader was to incur the displeasure of the authorities. Anath Bandhu Guha was in their bad books. He was not indeed deported. I believe he narrowly 'escaped it; but he was bound down to keep the peace under section 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code. It was a gross insult to a man of his position. But with him it was not merely a sentimental grievance, for he suffered from it, as under the rules then in force he was disqualified for election to the local Legislative Council. When he applied for the removal of the disqualification, the Local Government, which had the

power to remove it, rejected the application. Fortunately this rule and several others of the same character have been done away with on the recommendation of the Southborough Committee, and the range of executive discretion has been curtailed.

Last but not least among the distinguished men who identified themselves with the anti-Partition and *Swadeshi* movement and supported it throughout was Ambika Churn Majumder. He was rightly called the Grand Old Man of Faridpore (his native district) and of East Bengal. In intellectual eminence, in the possession of the gift of eloquence, and in unflinching love and devotion to the motherland, he stood in the forefront among the leaders of Bengal. He began life as a schoolmaster. He was my colleague in the Metropolitan Institution of Pundit Vidyasagar; but he early took to politics, and his interest in it was never-failing. He was associated with the Congress almost from its birth and was the President of one of the most memorable Congresses ever held, that of 1916, which adopted the Lucknow Convention and sealed the union between Hindus and Mohamedans in their efforts to secure their common political advancement.

Ambika Churn Majumder felt so strongly about the Partition that he once told me that, if the Partition was not modified, he would sell off his ancestral property in the new province and settle in West Bengal, and he seriously asked me to purchase some landed property for him in the 24-Parganas. He controlled the *Swadeshi* and anti-Partition movement in the district of Faridpore, and was always ready with his advice and active assistance whenever required. So great was his influence that on one occasion, in the height of the anti-Partition agitation, when the Lieutenant-Governor arrived at Faridpore, he found the railway station denuded of coolies, and the subordinate police had to carry the luggage of the ruler of the province.

It has been said by a great writer that the public affections are but an expansion of the domestic feelings, and that patriotism has its roots amid the sanctities of the home and the

tranquil surroundings of village life. Faridpore, his native district, will remember Ambika Churn Majumder as one of its greatest benefactors. He was for years the Chairman of the Faridpore Municipality, and the town of Faridpore owes its waterworks largely to his initiative and to his administrative vigour and efficiency. The Faridpore College, which has recently been established, is another monument of his public spirit, his capacity for solid achievement, and his unflinching love for the people among whom he was born and lived. Prostrated by disease, suffering from bereavements, which darkened his home, his interest in public work remained unabated, and from time to time, as occasion required, the Grand Old Man spoke out with the decisive emphasis of his younger days. In the schism that took place between the two wings of the Nationalist party over the Reform Scheme, Ambika Churn Majumder never hesitated, never wavered, but threw in his lot, with characteristic ardour, with his friends of the Moderate party with whom he had worked through life.\*

\*Source : S.N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 263-270.

## Surendranath Banerjea on the Bengal Partition a Settled Fact

The month of October was rapidly approaching. The 16th October was to be the day on which the Partition of Bengal was to take effect. For Bengal it was to be a day of national mourning. We were resolved to observe it as such, and the country warmly responded to our call. The programme of mourning was fixed in consultation with the mofussil leaders, and was widely circulated. There was to be: (1) The *Rakhi-Bandhan* ceremony—the red band of brotherly union was to be tied round the wrists of all whom we welcomed as brothers. It was to be the revival of an ancient Indian custom, and was to be emblematic of the new brotherly bond between the sundered province and old Bengal. (2) The 16th of October was to be observed as a day of fasting. The domestic hearth was not to be lit; food was not to be cooked except for the sick and the invalid; the shops were to be closed, business was to be suspended; people were to walk barefooted, and bathe in the Ganges in the early morning hours for purposes of purification. It was a self-denying ordinance, but it was cheerfully accepted, and, as the sequel showed, the heart and soul of the nation were in it.

But this was not all. The day was to be marked by the inauguration of a plan of constructive work. I proposed the

building of a Federation Hall, which, assuming that the Partition was not undone or modified, was to be the meeting-ground of the old province and its severed parts, the mark and symbol of their indivisible union. The idea suggested itself to me from what I saw at the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, where round the tomb of the great Napoleon are laurelled statues, representative of the different provinces. Those of Alsace and Lorraine were at the time veiled and shrouded. To me it seemed that we should have a memorial of that sort, statues of all the districts in Bengal, those of the sundered districts being shrouded until the day of their reunion. The Hall would serve other purposes of a public nature. It would keep alive the remembrance of our severance, and thus be an ever-living stimulus to our efforts to secure our reunion.

The proposal was carefully considered, and it was warmly supported by the late Sir Taraknath Palit and Sister Nivedita of the Ramkrishna Mission, that beneficent lady who had consecrated her life to, and died in, the service of India. Sir Taraknath Palit will go down to posterity as a princely benefactor in the cause of scientific education in Bengal; but he was a man of many-sided sympathies. When his soul was stirred, he was quite an active figure in our politics, helping and guarding our public interests with all the clear insight of an astute lawyer, and the warmth and enthusiasm of a generous friend. He was heart and soul with us in our efforts to undo the Partition, and, though stricken down by a fatal disease, he was with us whenever he could attend, and his clear-sighted guidance was to us a valuable help.

But laying the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall was not the only function fixed for the 16th October. The anti-Partition agitation and the *Swadeshi* movement were linked together, and it was decided to hold a great demonstration in order to raise a National Fund, chiefly for the purpose of helping the weaving industry.

Such, in short, was the programme fixed for the 16th October, 1905, the day on which the Partition of Bengal was to

take place. Our workers had been out all night, looking after the arrangements for the morrow. They were tired and exhausted, but full of high spirits, cheered by the conviction that the programme would be successfully carried out. The day dawned; the streets of Calcutta re-echoed from the early hours of the morning with the cry of *Bande-Mataram*, as band after band of men, young and old, paraded the streets on their way to bathe in the river, stopping at intervals to tie the *rakhi* round the wrists of passers-by. They were often accompanied by *Sankirton* parties singing the *Bande-Mataram* and other patriotic songs. The bathing-ghats were crammed with a surging mass of men and women, all furnished with quantities of *rakhis*, which they tied round the wrists of friends and acquaintances, and even of strangers.

I was out early in the morning visiting Beadon Square, Central College, and other places, which were thronged with people, whom I addressed. Crowds of young men took the dust of my feet and embraced me. My arms were red with the *rakhis* tied round them. It was a day worth living for—a day of inspiration that perhaps comes only once in a lifetime; but it was also a day of hard and strenuous work.

The meeting for laying the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall was fixed for 3.30 p.m. Long before the appointed hour, the grounds where the meeting was to be held were filled with a surging crowd, which flowed out into the streets, now rendered quite impassable. It was estimated that at least fifty thousand people must have been present. Yet so quiet and orderly was this vast assemblage that not a policeman was required, and no policeman was to be seen. The police had mustered strong in the different police stations, their services were not needed either to maintain order or to regulate traffic.

The function of laying the foundation-stone was to be performed by Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose. Of Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose I have spoken elsewhere and in another connexion. He came from one of the districts in the sundered province, the

district of Mymensingh, and he not only regarded the Partition of Bengal as a great national calamity, but felt it as a personal grievance. He was now an invalid, the victim of a deadly disease which carried him off in less than twelve months' time. He was confined to his bed; but, as in the case of many other great men, the spirit rose above the ailments of the flesh; and, despite his weakness and the deepening shadow of his approaching end, his interest in public affairs continued unabated. We approached him. We consulted his medical advisers. They thought that under proper conditions he might be permitted to perform the function. To us it was a matter of great satisfaction that the foundation-stone would be laid by one of the noblest sons of Bengal, whose patriotic enthusiasm had been stirred by the severance, by autocratic power, of old and time-honoured associations.

The speech that he prepared on his sick-bed, amid the daily inroads of a mortal disease, is striking evidence of the triumph of mind and spirit over matter. I regard it as the greatest of his oratorical performances, and one of the noblest orations to which it has been one's privilege to listen. Indeed, judged by what happened within a few months, it was the song of the dying swan. The honour of reading the speech fell to me, for my friend was too weak to read it himself : he could not indeed stand on his legs. At the appointed hour, attended by his medical advisers and carried in an invalid's chair, he was brought to the meeting amid cries of *Bande-Mataram*, the whole of that vast audience rising to its feet, as if to salute one who had risen from the dead. For months the public had heard nothing of Ananda Mohan Bose, except the news of his illness and of his growing infirmities, which were hurrying him on to his end.

Quiet being restored, Sir Gurudas Banerjee rose from his seat on the platform and in an impressive and eloquent speech delivered in Bengalee, in which he strongly condemned the Partition, proposed Ananda Mohan Bose to the chair. The proposal was carried by acclamation. The appearance of Sir Gurudas Banerjee on the platform of a political meeting and in

the role of a speaker was a fact so significant that it should have opened the eyes of the authorities to the deep feeling that lay behind the anti-Partition movement. A judge has no politics. According to Sir Gurudas, an ex-judge should have none. We may or may not accept this view. Some of the most distinguished of Indian judges have been of a different opinion, and after their retirement from the Bench have not hesitated to take their share in the political movements of the day; but that was not Sir Gurudas's opinion, and he stuck to it, with that quiet determination which so pre-eminently distinguished the man. On this occasion he was possibly overborne by the all-pervading influence of an irresistible public feeling, which penetrated our hearths and our homes, and captured the minds of young and old, rich and poor, men and women, alike. All bitterly resented the Partition. Some pretended to be neutral. Office-seekers and sycophants affected to be pleased.

The Chairman having been duly proposed, I read out the speech. I think I made myself heard by the vast audience that came to witness the proceedings, as I was told afterwards that the speech was distinctly heard from Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose's house, which was on the other side of the street. A Sikh priest of the highest social position, a descendant of Guru Nanak, Baba Kuar Singh, was among the audience, and he pronounced a benediction upon the function. Just before the foundation-stone was laid, Sir Ashutosh Chaudhuri read the following Proclamation in English, and Dr. Rabindranath Tagore followed him with a translation in Bengalee :

'Whereas the Government has thought fit to effectuate the Partition of Bengal in spite of the universal protest of the Bengalee nation, we hereby pledge and proclaim that we as a people shall do everything in our power to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of our province, and to maintain the integrity of our race. So God help us.'—A.M. Bose.

The Proclamation was settled in the *Bengalee* office, from

where we started for the Federation grounds, just before the meeting was held. It was afterwards said that we had no right to issue a proclamation, that being the exclusive function of the ruling authorities. I am unable to discuss the legal aspect of the question, which certainly did not trouble us at the time. We issued the Proclamation as a fitting sequel to a function that was to commemorate by a permanent memorial the indissoluble union between East and West Bengal. The Hall was to be the living symbol of our determination to counteract the evil influences of the Partition, and to maintain the integrity of our race; and we felt that it was as well that the fact should be set forth in a clear and emphatic statement, issued on a great occasion.

We afterwards purchased the Federation grounds in order to build the Hall. But the memorial became unnecessary. The Bengalee-speaking population, with the exception of those living in what may be called an outlying area, have been re-united by the modification of the Partition. A memorial hall, which was to commemorate the dismemberment of our province and to remind us of our duty to bring about its reunion, was, therefore, not only unnecessary, but might prove hurtful by perpetuating memories of bitter controversies which should recede into the background of oblivion.

The function over, Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose was taken back under his medical escort across the road to his residence. He was none the worse for the strain and the effort. The undaunted spirit of the man and his noble fervour, which was proof against weakness and disease, bore him up. But there was something also in the moral atmosphere, in the patriotic determination and the fervid enthusiasm of that vast audience, to help and sustain him. Those near and dear to him were anxious, but they felt happy and proud that their illustrious relative had passed through an ordeal, the severest for a man in his state of health, and had performed a great function with a dignity and an eloquence worthy of the occasion.

After the ceremony, the crowd, all barefooted, wended

their way to the house of Rai Pashupatinath Bose, a distance of nearly two miles. It had been decided that the collection for the National Fund, which was to help our industries, was to be made in the grounds of his palatial mansion. Due and adequate arrangements had been made for that purpose. Sir Ashutosh Chaudhuri, Mr. J Chaudhuri, Mr. Ambika Churn Majumder and myself, along with a few other friends forming a party, walked barefooted along the flinty road. When we arrived at the house we found the grounds crammed with a vast and increasing crowd. It was impossible for me to make my way. People rushed forward to take the dust of my feet. I had better describe what happened from the columns of a daily newspaper giving an account of the scene :

'His friends, at this juncture, gathered round him and helped him out of the crush. But the people, disappointed, said, piteously, that they had come from a long way off without any food whatever, only to see Babu Surendranath and receive his blessings. Similarly, as he came into the street on his way back from the meeting, the crowd rushed round him, and it was Babu Debendra Chunder Ghose, the Senior Government Pleader of Alipore, who happened to be in his carriage near, who helped him out of the crush.'

A sum of Rs. 70,000 was collected on that day and in the course of a few hours. The amount was made up of small subscriptions. It was the gift of the great middle class of Bengal : Rajas and Maharajas indeed subscribed, but they paid small sums. There was no canvassing of any kind. It was a spontaneous gift prompted by the emotions of the hour. It was to be devoted to the encouragement of weaving and the promotion of the domestic industries. Some money was spent upon a weaving school, which, however, did not prosper and had to be closed. The balance of the money is now in the Imperial Bank under the control of trustees. Out of the interest a monthly grant is made to the Home Industries Association, established by Lady Carmichael, and to a school for the industrial training of Indian women.

The months that followed the 16th October, 1905, were months of great excitement and unrest. The policy of the Government, especially that of East Bengal under Sir Bampfylde Fuller, added to the tension of the situation. He declared, half in jest, half in seriousness, to the amazement of all sober-minded men, that he had two wives, Hindu and Mohamedan, but that the Mohamedan was the favourite wife. A ruler who could publicly indulge in a display of offensive humour of this kind was clearly unfit for the high office which he held. The Civil Service took their cue from him; and his administration was conducted upon lines in the closest conformity with the policy which he had so facetiously announced. The taint spread to the judicial Bench, and in a well-known case brought down upon the erring judge the just censure of the High Court of Calcutta. In reversing the sentences passed upon the prisoners in the great Comilla Rioting Case in 1907, the High Court observed :

'The method of the learned Judge in dealing with the testimony of the witnesses by dividing them into two classes—Hindus and Mohamedans—and accepting the evidence of one class and rejecting that of the other, is open to severe criticism. The learned Judge ought to have directed his mind solely to the evidence which had been given before him, and to have excluded from his consideration all pre-conceived sympathies with either section of the population.'

This is very strong language, coming from the High Court with its great traditions of scrupulous fairness and judicial sobriety. But if preference or class bias had been the only fault of the new Government established in East Bengal, the position would not have been so grave as it soon became. The Partition was followed by a policy of repression, which added to the difficulties of the Government and the complexities of the situation. The cry of *Bande-Mataram*, as I have already observed, was forbidden in the public streets, and public meetings in public places were prohibited. Military police were stationed in peaceful centres of population, and they committed

assaults upon honoured members of the Hindu community, which excited the deepest public indignation. Respectable citizens were charged with sedition for issuing a *Swadeshi* circular, and Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt, the revered leader of the people of Barisal, a man universally respected, was so charged by Mr. Jack. The accusation was baseless and Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt obtained damages against him for libel in a Civil Court. The climax was reached when the police assaulted the delegates of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal in April, 1906, and forcibly dispersed the Conference.\*

\*Source : S.N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 197-203.

## Surendranath Banerjea on his visit to England (1909) to represent against Bengal Partition

So far as the anti-Partition movement was concerned, it seemed to many, even to some of the stalwarts of our party, that ours was a lost cause and that I was leading a forlorn hope. But I never despaired, not the faintest ray of despondency ever crossed my mind. My never-failing optimism stood me in good stead. But I had also solid ground to tread upon. The great leaders of public opinion in England whom I had interviewed, belonging, I may add, to all parties, did not like the Partition of Bengal, and especially the manner in which it was carried out during its concluding stages. One of them said to me, ‘Why does not Morley upset it?’ It was really Lord Morley’s great name and influence that propped it up; and I felt that if we continued the agitation for some time longer it was bound to go. The tide of circumstances soon began to roll in our favour. Everything comes to the man who knows how to wait. Patience and optimism are supreme qualities in public life. That has been my experience, and I bequeath it, with loving concern, to my countrymen.\*

\*Source : S N. Banerjea, A Nation in Making, p. 262.

## Bhupendranath Basu on the Partition of Bengal, Speech at Indian National Congress Session, Lahore, 1909

"I stand before you, I, a Bengali from Bengal, one of a very small number of men who have been able to come to your Province to attend this Congress. I stand before you, I stand at the bar of my own country, I stand before the best and the highest men in all India, I stand like a neophyte at the altar which you have raised for the worship of our Mother, to plead for a cause which to other may seem to be lost, to re-vitalise what to others may seem a vanished hope. Gentlemen, so long as the Bengali race will last, so long as the blood which flows through our veins courses through generations yet unborn so long as the picture of a United India remains on our vision, so long as the mighty rivers of my native Province flow on in their majesty and glory to the sea, so long as the fields and meadows of East Bengal wave in all their verdant glory, our cause will not be lost. So long as the inspiriting strains of Bande Mataram put new heart into generations of Bengalis yet to come, our cause will not be lost. For the moment we may have suffered defeat. For the moment the question seems to be settled, but, God willing, we shall yet turn the defeat into victory."\*

\*Source : Annie Besant, How India wrought for Freedom, (Delhi, 1974)  
p. 498.

## Lord Curzon to Lord Hamilton on the Partition of Bengal

“The Bengalis, who like to think themselves a nation, and who dream of a future when the English will have been turned out, and a Bengali Babu will be installed in Government House, Calcutta, of course bitterly resent any disruption that will be likely to interfere with the realization of this dream. If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again, and you will be cementing and solidifying, on the eastern flanks of India, a force already formidable and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in future.”\*

\**Source :* Confidential correspondence,--Hamilton and Curzon--Curzon's letter of 17th February, 1904 to the Secretary of State, for India, (National Archives of India, New Delhi).

## Curzon to Hamilton on the Importance of the City of Calcutta in Indian Affairs

“Calcutta is the centre from which the Congress Party is manipulated throughout the whole of Bengal and indeed the whole of India. Its best wire-pullers and its most frothy orators all reside here. The perfection of their machinery and the tyranny which it enables them to exercise, are truly remarkable. They dominate public opinion in Calcutta, they affect the High Court, they frighten the local Government, and they are sometimes not without serious influence upon the government of India. The whole of their activity is directed to creating an agency so powerful that they may one day be able to force a weak government to give them what they desire.”\*

\**Source* : Confidential correspondence—Hamilton and Curzon—Curzon’s letter 2nd February, 1905 to the Secretary of State. (National Archives of India, New Delhi).

## Lovat Fraser on the Partition of Bengal

"There were several causes which led to the organisation of the agitation against the partition. The first and most immediate was as Sir Andrew Fraser has pointed out, that is seemed likely to strike at two vested interests. One was the Calcutta Bar. The other was Calcutta native newspapers. They feared that the regeneration of Dacca would bring about the foundation of fresh newspapers at the capital of the new province, and that the people of Eastern Bengal would then turn to Dacca for their news rather than to Calcutta.

Behind the influence of the bar and the newspapers lay all the vindictive animosity which had been aroused against Lord Curzon among educated Bengalis by the Universities Act. The Wirepullers had been searching for a pretext to attack him, and they found it in the partition. Then there was the undoubted growth of a certain unity of sentiment among Bengali Hindus, upon which I have no intention of casting ridicule. The Bengalis have many admirable qualities; they constitute a substantial proportion of the people of India; they are excitable and easily led; but they are as God made them, and we shall not make the task of administration easier by treating them with a contempt they do not deserve.

There remains Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee, the ostensible leader of the public movement against partition, an emotional orator who was swept off his feet by the storm he raised but was unable to quell.

By far the most serious and potent influences which fomented and kept alive the agitation against the partition of Bengal came from England. They began with a telegram from Mr. Brodrick to Lord Curzon on August 16, 1905, upon his resignation.”\*

\*Source : Lovat, Fraser, *India under Curzon and After*, (London, 1911), pp. 384-386.

## Sir Bampfylde Fuller on Hindus and Muslims of Bengal

“I was like a man married to two wives, one a Hindu, the other a Muhammedan—both young and charming—but was forced into the arms of one of them by the rudeness of the other.”\*

\**Source* : Sir B. Fuller, Some Personal Experiences, (London, 1930), pp. 140-141.

## Rash Behari Ghosh on the Partition of Bengal

"The Partition of Bengal was followed by Russian methods of Government, with this difference, that the officials who devised them were Englishmen, while the Russian official is at least the countryman of those whom he governs or misgoverned. The singing of national songs and even the cry of "Bande Mataram" were forbidden under severe penalties. This ordinance was fittingly succeeded by the prosecution of schoolboys, the quartering of military and punitive police, the prohibition and forcible dispersion of public meetings, and these high-handed proceedings attained their crown and completion in the tragedy at Barisal, when the Provincial Conference was dispersed by the Police, who wantonly broke the peace in order, I imagine, to keep the peace. Now, though we are a thoroughly loyal people and our loyalty is not to be easily shaken because it is founded on a more solid basis than mere sentiment, I have no hesitation in saying that we should be less than men if we could forget the tragedy of that day, the memory of which will always fill us with shame and humiliation. And this leads me to remark that it was not cowardice that prevented our young men from retaliating. It was their respect for law and order—their loyalty to their much reviled leaders that kept them in check. All this has now happily been put an end to. But as

soon as the cloud began to lift, those Anglo-Indians who are obliged to live in this land of regrets merely from a high sense of duty were seized with the fear that their monopoly of philanthropic work might be interrupted, and immediately commenced a campaign of slander and misrepresentation which in virulence and mendacity has never been equalled. I. C. S.'s in masks and editors of Anglo-Indian newspapers forthwith began to warn the English people that we were thoroughly disloyal, ferreting out sedition with an ingenuity which would have done no discredit to the professors of Laputa.”\*

\*Source : Annie Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom, pp. 442-443.

## G. K. Gokhale on the Partition of Bengal

"Gentlemen, the question that is uppermost in the minds of us all at this moment is the Partition of Bengal. A cruel wrong has been inflicted on our Bengalee brethren, and the whole country has been stirred to its deepest depths in sorrow and resentment, as had never been the case before. The scheme of partition, concocted in the dark and carried out in the face of the fiercest opposition that any Government measure has encountered during the last half-a-century, will always stand as a complete illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule—its utter contempt for public opinion, its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feelings of the people, the mockery of an appeal to its sense of justice, its cool preferance of Service interest to those of the governed. Lord Curzon and his advisers—if he ever had any advisers—could never allege that they had no means of Judging of the depth of public feeling in the matter. All that could possibly have been done by way of a respectful representation of the views of the people had been done. As soon as it was known that a partition of some sort was contemplated, meeting after meeting of protest was held, till over five hundred public meetings in all part of the province had proclaimed in no uncertain voice that the attempt

to dismember a compact and homogeneous province, to which the people were passionately attached and of which they were justly proud, was deeply resented and would be resisted to the uttermost. Memorials to the same effect poured in upon the Viceroy. The Secretary of State for India was implored to withhold his sanction to the proposed measure. The intervention of the British House of Commons was sought first by a monster petition, signed by sixty thousand people, and later by means of a debate on the subject raised in the House by our ever-watchful friend, Mr. Herbert Roberts. All proved unavailing. The Viceroy had made up his mind. The officials under him had expressed approval. What business had the people to have an opinion of their own and to stand in the way? To add insult to injury, Lord Curzon described the opposition to his measure as "manufactured"—an opposition in which all classes of Indians, high and low, uneducated and educated, Hindus and Mahomedans had joined, an opposition than which nothing more intense, nothing more wide-spread, nothing more spontaneous had been seen in this country in the whole course of our political agitation. Let it be remembered that when the late Viceroy cast this stigma on those who were ranged against his proposals, not a single public pronouncement in favour of those proposals had been made by any section of the community; and that foremost among opponents of the proposals were men like Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore and Sir Gurudas Banerji, Raja Peary Mohan Mukherji and Dr. Rash Behary Ghose, the Maharajas of Mymensingh and Kassimbazar,—men who keep themselves aloof from ordinary political agitation and never say a word calculated in any way to embarrass the authorities, and who came forward to oppose publicly the Partition project only from an overpowering sense of the necessity of their doing what they could to avert a dreaded calamity. If the opinions of even such men are to be brushed aside with contempt, if all Indians are to be treated as no better than dumb-driven cattle, if men, whom any other country would delight to honour, are to be thus made to realize the utter humiliation and helplessness of their position in their own land, then all I can say is "Good-bye to all hope of co-operating in any way with the bureaucracy in the interests of the people". I can conceive of no

graver indictment of British Rule than that such a state of things should be possible after a hundred years of that rule.

Gentlemen, I have carefully gone through all the papers which have been published by the Government on this subject of Partition. Three have struck me forcibly—determination to dismember Bengal at all costs, an anxiety to promote the interests of Assam at the expense of Bengal, and a desire to suit everything to the interests and convenience of the Civil Service. It is not merely that a number of new prizes have been thrown into the lap of that Service—one Lieutenant-Governorship, Two Memberships of the Board of Revenue, one Commissionership of a Division, several Secretaryships and Under Secretaryships—but alternative schemes of readjustment have been rejected on the express ground that their adoption would be unpopular with members of the Service. Thus even if a reduction of the charge of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal had really become inevitable—a contention, which the greatest living authority on the subject, Sir Henry Cotton, who was Secretary to the Bengal Government under seven Lieutenant-Governors, does not admit—one would have thought that the most natural course to take was to separate Behar, Orissa and Chota Nagpur from Bengal and form them into a separate Province. This would have made the Western Province one of 30 millions in place of the Eastern. But this, says the Government of India, “would take from Bengal all its best districts and would make the Province universally unpopular”. This was of course a fatal objection, for compared with the displeasure of the Civil Service, the trampling under foot of public opinion and the outraging of the deepest feelings of a whole people was a smaller matter. But one can see that administrative considerations were really only secondary in the determination of this question. The dismemberment of Bengal had become necessary, because in the view of the Government of India,

“it cannot be for the lasting good of any country of any people that public opinion or what passes for it should be manufactured by a comparatively small number of people at a single centre and should be disseminated thence for

universal adoption, all other view being discouraged or suppressed." "From every point of views," the Government further states, "it appears to us desirable to encourage the growth of centres of independent opinion, local aspiration ideals and to preserve the growing intelligence and enterprise of Bengal from being cramped and stunted by the process of forcing it prematurely into a mould of rigid and sterile uniformity."

You will see that this is only a paraphrase in Lord Curzon's most approved style, of the complaint of the people of Bengal that their fair Province has been dismembered to destroy their growing solidarity, check their national aspirations and weaken their power of co-operating for national ends, lessen the influence of their educated classes with their countrymen, and reduce the political importance of Calcutta. After this let no apologist of the late Viceroy pretend that the object of the partition was administrative convenience and not political repression.

Gentlemen, it is difficult to speak in terms of due restraint of Lord Curzon's conduct throughout this affair. Having published his earlier and smaller scheme for public criticism, it was his clear duty to publish similarly the later and larger scheme, which he afterwards substituted for it. But in consequence of the opposition which the first scheme encountered, he abandoned the idea of taking the public any more into his confidence and proceeded to work in the matter in the dark. For more than a year nothing further was heard of his intentions, and while he was silently elaborating the details of his measure, he allowed the impression to prevail that the Government had abandoned the Partition project. And in the end, when he had succeeded in securing the Secretary of State's sanction to the scheme, it was from Simla, where he and his official colleagues were beyond the reach of public opinion, that he sprang the final orders of Government upon an unprepared people. Then suddenly his resignation. And the people permitted themselves for a while to hope that it would bring them at least a brief respite, especially as Mr. Brodrick had

promised shortly before to present further papers on the subject to Parliament and that was understood to mean that the scheme could not be brought into operation till Parliament reassembled at the beginning of next year. Of course, after Lord Curzon's resignation, the only proper, the only dignified course for him was to take no step, which it was difficult to revoke and the consequence of which would have to be faced, not by him, but by his successor; he owed it to Lord Minto to give him an opportunity to examine the question for himself; he owed it to the Royal visitors not to plunge the largest Province of India into violent agitation and grief on the eve of their visit to it. But Lord Curzon was determined to partition Bengal before he left India and so he rushed the necessary legislation through the Legislative Council at Simla, which only the official members could attend, and enforced his orders on 16th October last—a day observed as one of universal mourning by all classes of people in Bengal. And now, while he himself has gone from India, what a sea of troubles he has bequeathed to his successor. Fortunately there are grounds to believe that Lord Minto will deal with the situation with tact, firmness, and sympathy, and it seems he has already pulled up to some extent. Lord Curzon's favourite Lieutenant, the first ruler of the new Eastern Province Mr. Fuller has evidently cast to the winds all prudence, all restraints, all sense of responsibility. Even if a fraction of what the papers have been reporting be true, his extraordinary doing must receive the attention of the new Secretary of State for India and the House of Commons. There is no surer method of goading a docile people into a state of dangerous despair than the kind of hectoring and repression he has been attempting.

But, Gentlemen, as has been well said, even in things evil there is a soul of goodness, and the dark times, through which Bengal has passed and is passing, have not been without a message of bright hope for the future. The tremendous upheaval of popular feeling, which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of our national progress. For the first time since British rule began, all sections of the Indian community with-

out distinction of caste or creed, have been moved by a common impulse and without the stimulus of external pressure to act together in offering resistance to a common wrong. A wave of true national consciousness has swept over the Province, and at its touch old barriers have for the time, at any rate, been thrown down, personal jealousies have vanished, other controversies have been hushed. Bengal's heroic stand against the oppression of a harsh and uncontrolled bureaucracy has astonished and gratified all India, and her sufferings have not been endured in vain, when they have helped to draw closer all parts of the country in sympathy and in aspiration. A great rush and uprising of the waters, such as has been recently witnessed in Bengal, cannot take place without a little inundation over the banks here and there. These little excess are inevitable, when large masses of men move spontaneously—especially when the movement is from darkness unto light, from bondage towards freedom—and they must not be allowed to disconcert us too much. The most outstanding fact of the situation is that the public life of this country has received an accession of strength of great importance, and for this all India owes a deep debt of gratitude to Bengal. Of course, the difficulties which confront the leaders of Bengal are enormous and perhaps they have only just begun. But I know there is no disposition to shrink from any responsibilities, and I have no doubt that whatever sacrifices are necessary will be cheerfully made. All India is at their back, and they will receive in the work that lies before them the cordial sympathy and assistance of the other Provinces. Any discredit, that is allowed to fall on them, affects us all. They on their side must not forget that the honour of all India is at present in their keeping.”\*

\*Source : Sankar Ghose, Congress Presidential Speeches, (Delhi, 1972)  
pp. 28-32.

G. K. Gokhale to William Wedderburn  
on the anti-partition Movement in  
Bengal letter dated 24th May, 1907

"The anti-Partition agitation which is confined mostly to the Hindus is naturally resented by the officials, who are still smarting under a sense of humiliation in connection with Sir B. Fuller's resignation. The wild talk in which some of the more irresponsible speakers on the Hindu side have been indulging on the subject of independence or Swaraja without British control as they call it is also naturally setting the officials against the Hindu community. Then the denunciations in the Calcutta press, often based on inaccurate information or unfair inferences, are a further source of irritation to the officials. Lastly, the aggressive preaching of the boycott and the resort to picketing in some districts have been provoking for the last year and more the silent wrath of the Government. All these things have combined to create a bitterly anti-Hindu atmosphere in official regions and there is no doubt that the officials have allowed the impression to spread (and have even openly encouraged it) that the Hindus were in their bad books and that the Mahomedan community was the special object of their favour and patronage. There is also no doubt that when the present disturbances first began, there was a marked tendency

to wink at Mahomedan rowdyism and leave the Hindus more or less to their own fate. I think these facts could be established before a Commission of Inquiry if one were granted. The supineness of the Executive in dealing with the situation even when it became clear that Mohamedan rowdies were getting altogether out of hand on all sides has made a painful impression in the country and unless a searching inquiry is made into how this temporary breakdown of the Government machinery took place, the harm that has been done will not be remedied. Mr. Morley stated the other day in the House that these disturbances were due to Mahomedan resentment of the boycott preached by Hindus. I am sorry to say that this is on the whole a very unfair statement of the case. It is true that the boycott campaign of the anti-Partitionists has contributed its share to the difficulties of the present situation, though that campaign has given far more offence to the Government and the European community than to the Mahomedans, who, so far as the weaving class is concerned, have even gained to some extent by it. The boycott of Liverpool salt has no doubt inflicted a serious hardship on poor people and as the bulk of the Mahomedans in the Eastern Province are very poor, they have in my opinion a just grievance there. But this by itself would never have led to a breach of the peace if the impression had not prevailed in the Province, especially among the more ignorant and fanatical sections of the Mahomedans that the Government would be behind them in any injury they might inflict upon the Hindus. You know that I have never approved this boycott propaganda, which to my mind is bound to do us great harm in our present political and economic condition. More than once during the last two years have I warned our Bengal friends privately against the risk to which they were exposing the whole country by this propaganda. But I feel bound to say that it is most unfair to throw the sole or even the greater part of the responsibility for the present disturbances on the boycott movement. A number of Mahomedan rowdies have been preaching for some time a holy war against the Hindus, not on account of the boycott but on religious grounds. The Red pamphlet, which I have seen myself and which is of a most inflammatory character, has been circulated throughout the

Province and in this pamphlet the Mahomedans are called upon to rise and destroy the Hindus, so that the glory of Islam be once more re-established. I mention these things not urge anything against the Mahomedans, because these charges and counter-charges between the two communities are harmful to the real interest of both and the quarrel is deeply painful and humiliating to those whose best hopes for the future of the country lie in the two communities working together and whose best energies are given to promoting relations of harmony and cooperation between them. I may even go further and say that as the Mahomedans of East Bengal are in a depressed condition compared with the Hindus, I would really strain a point in their favour if I could by any means do so. I do not wish even now to blame them for what has happened, for they are ignorant and fanatical and they know no better. But I want you to see clearly the unfairness of the Government. By committing Mr. Morley to the Statement that boycott was the cause of these Hindu—Mahomedan disturbances in East Bengal, the officials have armed themselves with a new power to put down the agitation against partition, for they will now repress all preaching, direct or indirect, of boycott on the ground that it leads to a breach of the peace as admitted by the Secretary of State in Parliament.”\*

\*Source : Gokhale Papers, File No. 203, Part I (National Archives of India, New Delhi).

## G. K. Gokhale on the Swadeshi Movement

“Gentlemen, I will now say a few words on a movement which has spread so rapidly and has been hailed with so much enthusiasm all over the country during the last few months—The Swadeshi movement. It is necessary at the outset to distinguish it from another movement, started in Bengal, which has really given it such immense impetus—the boycott of British goods. We all know that when our Bengali brethren found that nothing would turn the late Viceroy from his purpose of partitioning Bengal, that all their protests in the Press and on the Platform, all their memorials to him, to the Secretary of State and to Parliament were unavailing, that the Government exercised its despotic strength to trample on their most cherished feelings and injure their dearest interests and that no protection against this of any kind was forthcoming from any quarter, they in their extremity resolved to have recourse to this boycott movement. This they did with a twofold object—first as a demonstration of their deep resentment at the treatment they were receiving; and, secondly, to attract the attention of the people in England to their grievances, so that those who were in a position to call the Government of India to account might understand what was taking place in India. It was thus as a

political weapon, used for a definite political purpose, that they had recourse to the boycott; and in the circumstances of their position every justification for the step they took. And I can tell you from personal experience that their action has proved immensely effective in drawing the attention of English people to the state of things in our country. But a weapon like this must be reserved only for extreme occasions. There are obvious risks involved in its failure, and it cannot be used with sufficient effectiveness unless there is an extra-ordinary upheaval of popular feeling behind it.”\*

\*Source : Sankar Ghose, *Congress Presidential Speeches*, p. 33.

## G. K. Gokhale on the Swadeshi Movement at the 21st Indian National Congress

"The devotion to Motherland, which is enshrined in the highest Swadeshi, is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself. India needs to-day above everything else that the gospel of this devotion should be preached to high and low, to Prince and to peasant, in town and in hamlet, till the Service of Motherland becomes with us as overmastering a passion as it is in Japan."\*

\*Source : Annie Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom, (New Delhi, 1974) p. 419.

**Letter from Lord Hardinge to  
Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for  
India, 24th August, 1911**

“There is only one big Mohammedan in Eastern Bengal, and he is the Nawab of Dacca. I intend to recommend him for an honour, and he is at the same time hopelessly in debt to the Government of India. I do not anticipate any opposition from him.”\*

\**Source* : Letter from the Viceroy Lord Hardinge to Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, dated 24th August, 1911. (Hardinge Papers) (National Archives of India, New Delhi).

## Lord Hardinge on the Reunion of Bengal, 1911

"After long discussion with Sir J. Jenkins Home Member in Hardinge's Council with whose views I was quickly in general agreement, I drew up a very secret memorandum which I submitted to the Members of my Council for their opinion. The principal points were : (1) The transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. (2) The creation of United Bengal into a presidency with a Governor in Councill appointed from England. (3) The creation of Bihar and Orissa into a Lieutenant-Governorship with a Legislative Council and a capital at Patna, and (4) the restoration of the Chief Commissionership of Assam. All the members of my Council agreed in principle, some of them pointing out objections that might be raised to the scheme, none of which were however in any way vital. I decided therefore to submit the scheme for the consideration of the Secretary of State, giving him not only my own views but those of all and each of the members of my Council. On the 19th July I wrote a long letter to Crewe containing full details of the policy I proposed, placing before him the advantages to be obtained, and the objections that might be raised, but advocating strongly its acceptance as the best and only certain means of securing Peace and reconciliation in Bengal, with at the same time a statesmanlike change in "the general

situation of the Government of India. I urged upon Crewe the necessity for extreme secrecy whether my scheme was accepted or not, and I told him that I felt this need so strongly that I myself made copies of all my letters on the subject, while the notes of the Members of my Council had been privately typewritten.

It was on the 7th August that I received a very satisfactory telegram from Crewe telling me that I had his "entire support and full authority to proceed". He agreed that the first announcements as regards Delhi and the Governorship of Bengal must be made at the Durbar and that absolute secrecy should be maintained till then. He asked at the same time that he should receive a formal despatch from my Government which I could send to him personally as a private letter for the sake of secrecy, and which should be prepared with a view to ultimate publication in its entirety."\*

\**Source* : Lord Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, (London, 1948) pp. 38-39.

## Lord Hardinge on Terrorism in Punjab and Bengal

"The two provinces of India that created anxiety owing to the unrest that prevailed were Bengal and the Punjab, the former largely owing to the weakness of the Provincial Government and the latter owing to the arrival and incursion of 700 Sikh revolutionaries from America. The Government of the Punjab succeeded in arresting nearly all the Sikh leaders on their arrival in the province, while the rest who started creating disturbances in the districts were caught by the Sikh villagers and handed over to the police. At the request of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, I authorized the seizure and detention in prison, under Regulation III of 1818, of more than 300 Sikh revolutionaries and the police surveillance of a good many more. In view of the situation in the Punjab, and the alarm expressed to me by leading Indians of Calcutta at the prevailing insecurity in Bengal, needing strong executive action which the Government of Bengal appeared unwilling or unable to take, I decided to introduce a law on the lines of the English Act for the Defence of the Realm, so as to make it easier to cope with crime in those two provinces. This was done and a far more drastic Dora than her English sister, was submitted to the Legislative Assembly. When the Bill was published it provoked a considerable outcry

and several Indian members protested to me privately against the stringency of some of its most drastic provisions and said that they would have to oppose the Bill in the Assembly. I told them that they were free to criticize the Bill in debate and to say whatever they pleased against it when it came up for discussion and that I quite appreciated their point of view that, as responsibility for peace and tranquillity in India rested with me, I nevertheless confidently counted upon them to pass the law in the end. When the Bill came up for debate a large number of amendments were proposed, and the Indian members aired their criticisms freely, but in the end it was passed unanimously with two slight amendments that I accepted when I wound up the debate in a carefully considered speech. The two trifling amendments "saved the faces" of the Indian critics."\*

\*Source : Lord Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, pp. 116-117.

## Nawab Salimulla Khan on the Partition of Bengal

"In view of the recent utterances of Dr. Rashbehari Ghose and the action of the Madras Congress in passing a resolution against the Partition of Bengal, the League felt that it was necessary to inform the Government and the publice of the Mohammedan attitude in the matter, and unanimously adopted a strongly worded resolution in favour of the Partition.<sup>1</sup> A very large number of the members of the League, hailing from all parts of the country, supported the resolution, which was moved by Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhry. He said :

The advocates of withdrawal of Partition have repeatedly urged that the unrest and excitement would subside with the withdrawal. I confess I have not for myself been able to comprehend such a position, so persistently and strenuously advanced. Was the Partition synchronous with the unrest? I ask you, gentlemen, to say aye or nay. I am sure that the interrogation would yield a unanimous nay. For the most careless critics of events cannot deny that the unrest is of no recent growth, and that its origin dates back to a time far antecedent to the Partition of Bengal. Again, is it not natural

1. The text of the resolution is not given in the report of Proceedings.

to ask that if the root cause of the unrest and anarchism is the Partition of Bengal, why should the unrest and anarchism have spread over all of India? It is therefore absolutely absurd to assert that the modification of the Partition would be followed by the subsidence of the anarchical spirit. The anarchical spirit has nothing to do with the Partition. The exposures in the law courts of the bomb conspiracies, of the train wrecking attempts of the secret societies for the destruction of British rule, of the doings of the 'national' dacoits, would go to show that the spirit of turbulence and terrorism is not a recent product, but has its roots in deep-seated plans and plots for the overthrow of the Government. Do the palliatives of the unrest really know their constituents? Do they then really mean to tell us that the cry for *Swaraj* is a meaningless and absurd cry and would stop the moment the crime of Partition is atoned for by its withdrawal? People who have lived long enough in India would not, I am sure, submit to this sort of tomfoolery.

Gentlemen, I can say one thing in the full confidence and courage of conviction: if the Partition was a blunder, a greater and graver blunder would be to withdraw or modify it. Indeed, it would be the most egregious blunder in the history of British India. I am not sure whether any sane administration would go to that extent, for while it would be a practical surrender of *Pax Britannica* into the hands of the vociferous agitators, it would also mean to the larger and more important population in Eastern Bengal, the Musalmans, that the Government seeks not the happiness of the greatest number—the established, admitted and accepted principle of English political ethics—but is prone to climb down to the hectoring and terrorizing bodies of agitators. But what are the arguments against the partition? Up to now the stock argument with the anti-partitionists has been the mere sentimental one that it divides the Bengali Hindu race. Could not the Bengali Musalmans say the same thing? Could not the Musalmans, too, cry that the partition has divided the Bengali Musalmans into two different provincial areas? Could not the Punjabi Musalmans, in like manner, say that the creation of the Frontier Province divides them into

two different political divisions? Could not, I ask, the Mohammedans of upper India similarly complain that the Punjab and the United Provinces break up a no less homogeneous people into two different political and administrative areas?

Could not Musalmans have raised the standard of revolt when Delhi, Karnal and Gurgaon districts were transferred to the Punjab Province? Could not similarly the Biharis threaten disturbance because they have been inculded in the Bengal administration? Assam was separated in 1874 from Bengal and made into a separate Province. Could it not raise the same cry when, by the redistribution of 1905, it had to revert to the old order of being mixed up with Bengal ? I must say that the enunciation of such a doctrine is the enunciation of a dangerous principle in the governance of a country like India.

The duplication of the administrative machinery has not only raised the standard of efficiency in the government of the reconstituted province, but, has afforded a great security of life and prosperity to the people. What was the state of affairs in the eastern part of the province, especially in the tracts watered by the Brahmaputra, the Pudda and the Megna. They were so detached and segregated from the centre of administrative influence that it was impossible, under the old system, to have hoped for any improvement, social, political, educational, or commercial, before many long years to come.

The Partition has given a new life to the people in the Eastern Province. They are feeling a refreshing sense and a relief from the thraldom of...Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> They find their rights more quickly recognized and their existence and importance more adequately appreciated than they could as a mere appendage, as heretofore, of Western Bengal. They find that if...<sup>1</sup> some 100 deputy magistrates and a like number of sub-dupties, *munsiffs* and sub-registrars have had to be appointed, these appointments went to the children of the soil, Hindus and

<sup>1</sup> These clauses have been omitted as, doubtless owing to some editorial error in the source document, they do not make sense.

Mohammedans. In fact, the people feel that in neglected Eastern Bengal, the people have got what Ireland has so strenuously been fighting for, I mean home-rule and not rule from Calcutta.

I hope it would not be out of place if I attempted to meet the criticism of our Bengali Hindu friends on what they regard as the detriment to nationalism as they apprehend it by Partition (*sic*). One is really very curious to hear from them the cry of unity and nationalism in danger. What is, pray, the real significance and import of this nationalism ? Does it mean a cementing together of the Bengali Hindus within themselves and outside with all other races ? Does the euphonious phase 'Indian Nation' mean only and restrictedly the Hindus of the two Bengals ? Is not the mixing up and fusion of all the various races a consummation to be striven after and desired ? When, then, I ask my Hindu friends, should there be the cry of the break up, the split up, the division and so forth of the Bengali Nation ? Is it to be assumed and adopted (*sic*) that the development of an Indian nationality should be synonymous with the development of the Bengali Hindu, apart from and outside all, other races and communities ? An eventual evolution of an Indian nationality logically means the fusion of all races ultimately into a homogenous whole. The cry of nationalism in danger cannot therefore come with good grace from our Bengali Hindu friends, when a portion of them are asked to cast their lot with the Assamese, another fraction asked to join the hands of fellowship with the Biharis, or another group required to mingle with the Orias. So far, therefore, the cry of nationalism in danger is false and unfounded cry; for what is really in danger is not nationalism, but spirit of exclusivism and privilege of monopoly.\*\*\*

\*Source : A.M. Zaidi, From Syed to the Emergence of Jinnah, Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India, Vol, I, (New Delhi, 1975) pp. 176-179.

## Nawab Salimulla Khan on the Annulment of the Partition of Bengal

"I am now forced to refer to another Durbar announcement which compels me to say some bitter truths, but on which I cannot keep altogether silent, for I am sure my silence would be misunderstood. I am sorry I have got to take the risk of saying things which may perhaps expose me to contumely; but I feel that I cannot let this opportunity pass without an attempt at expressing our real feelings over a matter which weighs so heavily on our hearts—I mean the annulment of the Partition. I hope I will not be misunderstood. I am not one of those who used to look upon the Partition, in itself, as the only panacea for all our evils. The Partition gave us a great opportunity to bestir ourselves, and it awakened in our hearts the throbings of a new national life which went pulsating through the various sections of our community in Eastern Bengal. I hope, gentlemen, you will believe me when I assure you that the Musalmans of East Bengal supported the Partition, not out of enmity to our Hindu brethren or at the bidding of the Government, but because we felt sure that the new administrative arrangements in East Bengal would afford us ample opportunities for self-improvement. We felt sure that the people of East Bengal, particularly the Musalmans, would be immensely benefited by a sympathetic administration easily accessible to them, and

always ready to devote its time and attention exclusively to their welfare. As for ourselves, the Musalmans of East Bengal, we came to realize for the first time in our history that we too had rights and privileges as British subjects, and that it was only necessary for us to put our own shoulders to the wheel to free ourselves from that state of servile dependence on a dominant community in which we had been living before the Partition. How far we took advantage of these opportunities of self-improvement offered to us, it is now needless for me to discuss. This is now an integral part of the history of the East Bengal districts for the six years (1905-1911) during which the Partition remained in force.

Our ill-wishers at once perceived that the Partition would necessarily bring to the fore the long-neglected claims of the Musalmans of East Bengal, and although we never got more than what was justly our due, what little we gained was so much a loss to them. We regretted that this should be so, but it was unavoidable. It was perhaps unavoidable also that philanthropy of our opponents should not be equal to the occasion, for they saw in the maintenance of the Partition a possibility of the Musalmans of East Bengal regaining a portion of their well-deserved rights as citizens of the British Empire. Those who are forced to give up a portion of their long-enjoyed monopoly, however unjustifiable in nature and origin, will readily understand the feelings of our enemies after the Partition. It was, therefore, only natural that they started a vigorous agitation to have the Partition annulled and to secure a reversion to the old order of things. Over the vehemence of this agitation, the excesses to which some of the agitators could go, and the violent crimes of which they became guilty in giving expression to their pent-up feelings against the Government, I would draw a veil, for they are matters of public notoriety and will soon pass into history. Seditious writings in the press were backed up by revolutionary speeches on the platform, and a band of irresponsible agitators roamed at large over the country to instil into the receptive minds of the youths the deadly poison of anarchical ideas. To give effect to their dis-loyal feelings against the Government, the agitators organized a

boycott of British goods, and under colour of supporting an economic movement, sought to inflame the minds of the ignorant masses against Britain and its people. For some time the whole of Bengal seemed to be in the throes of a violent revolution, and there was hardly any peace in the land. Political murders were followed by political dacoities, and the officials entrusted with the maintenance of law and order harassed in a way which would have exhausted even the patience of job.

The reason for all this violent agitation was not far to seek. The agitators themselves alleged that Bengali sentiment had been outraged by placing them under two separate administrations, and that the Government wanted to injure their interests by placing them in a minority. It is a pity that this specious excuse for all this violent agitation and sedition should have been accepted by Government and believed by shrewd politicians like His Highness the Aga Khan. The real cause of the Bengali opposition to the Partition lay far deeper than in the plausible excuse of outraged sentiments, and I do not wish to repeat what I have already said on this point.

The Musalmans naturally refused to join the agitation because it was so violently opposed to their feelings of loyalty and because it was directed against a measure which had, proved of so much benefit to their interests. The agitators strained every nerve to win them over to their side and seduce them from their loyalty, but without success. Those who know the utter helplessness of Musalmans at the hands of their Bengali landlord, lawyer or creditor, will easily have an idea of the tremendous sacrifices which Musalmans had to make in rallying on the side of law and order. Bitter feelings arose between the two communities—not an account of the Partition, as the Government of India seem to imply in their Despatch, but because the Musalmans refused to join the agitators in their seditious conspiracies against the Government.

Vigorous measures were then adopted by the Government to vindicate its authority, and although they brought about an apparent calm, they inflamed the minds of the agitators more

fully against the Government. Gradually, the position of affairs was this—on one side there was the community of agitators with, in many cases, wealth, education and influence to back them, and on the other, there was the loyal community, both of Hindus and Musalmans, who had faced the onslaught of the agitators and incurred their bitter hostility in supporting the Government.

All at once the Government of India decided upon the annulment of Partition, based, as they have said, on broad grounds of administrative expediency, but affected in a way which to the popular mind conveyed the impression of having been exacted by clamour and agitation. The ignorant masses understand nothing about constitutional struggles, and by them the anti-Partition agitation and its apparent successes were regarded as the outcome of a trial of strength between the Bengali politician and the Government. When the Partition was annulled, the popular interpretation was that the Government had been defeated, and the exultant agitators in their hour of triumph did all they could to exaggerate the importance of their victory. The result has been a serious blow to British prestige all over the country, especially in East Bengal. But this is not at all. The annulment of the Partition had all the appearance of a ready concession to the clamours of an utterly sedition agitation. It has appeared to put a premium on sedition and disloyalty, and created an impression in the minds of the irresponsible masses that even the Government can be brought down on its knees by a reckless and persistent defiance of constituted authority. Moreover, it has discredited British rule to an extent which is deeply to be regretted. It has hitherto been felt throughout the East that the word of the British Government is its bond, and that, come what may, Government cannot go back on its plighted word. Anything which weakens this belief must irreparably injure British prestige in India and the entire East in general.

To us, the Musalmans of East Bengal, the annulment means the deprivation of those splendid opportunities at self-improvement which we had secured by the Partition. But it is

not the loss of these opportunities merely, heavy as that is, that forms the burden of grief over the annulment of the Partition. It is the manner in which the change has been brought about, without even warning or consulting us, which adds to the poignancy of our grief. I think I may fairly claim that though we should doubtless have urged our views strongly, our subsequent action has shown that we would have felt that Government by consulting us had shown its full confidence in our loyalty. And had there even been a chance of a Mohammedan agitation in East Bengal, the mere fact that the announcement had been made by His Gracious Majesty himself would have sufficed to render it impossible. We preferred to restrain ourselves from the course which might have commended itself on the first impulses of the moment, and did not wish to embarrass Government by agitation against an administrative measure which, however galling to our feelings, has had the impress of the Royal assent and approval. We hope we have succeeded in setting an example of genuine loyalty and willing obedience to the words of our Sovereign which canst and the severest tests.”\*

\*Source : A.M. Zaidi, From Syed to the Emergence of Jinnah, pp. 372-376.

## A. C. Mazumdar on the Partition of Bengal

"As the agitation began to increase Lord Curzon grew more and more nervous; while public criticisms both in the Press as well as on platforms gradually made him more and more relentless.

The meeting after reviewing the entire administration of Lord Curzon passed Resolution condemning all his retrograde proceedings culminating in the proposal for the disruption of an advanced province and of an extremely sensitive people passionately attached to their country. This was the first time when the people met openly to pass a vote of censure upon a Viceroy. This was of course for an equally sensitive Viceroy, to tolerate and descending from the proud pedestal of a Viceroy Lord Curzon assumed the role of a political agitator which he had so strongly condemned in his convocation speech. Fully resolved to crush this new spirit by dividing the people against themselves Lord Curzon proceeded to East Bengal and there at large meetings of Mohammedans, specially convened for the purpose explained to them that his object in partitioning Bengal was not only to relieve the Bengal administration, but also to create a Mohammedan province, where Islam would be predominant and its followers in the ascendancy, and that with

this view he had decided to include the two remaining districts of the Dacca Division in his scheme. The Mussalmans of East Bengal headed by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca saw their opportunity and took the bait. Henceforth the Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal forgetting the broader question of national advancement and ignoring the interests of their own community in Western Bengal deserted the national cause and gradually began to secede from the anti-partition agitation. It is, however, only fair to admit that the most cultured and advanced among the Mussalmans did not flinch and speaking at the Congress of 1906 Nawabzada Khwajah Atikullah, the brother of Nawab Salimullah openly said, "I may tell you at once that it is not correct that the Mussalmans of Eastern Bengal are in favour of the partition of Bengal; the real fact is that it is only a few leading Mohammedans who for their own purposes supported the measure." The Central Mohammedan Association in Calcutta in submitting its opinion to the Government through its Secretary, the late Nawab Ameer Hussain, C.I.E. observed; "My committee are of opinion that no portion of the Bengali-speaking race should be separated from Bengal without the clearest necessity for such separation, and they think in the present case such necessity does not exist."

The agitation, however, went on in course of which hundreds of memorials were submitted to Government as well as to the Secretary of State, one of which was submitted over the signature of 70,000 people of Eastern Bengal. But the Government maintained an attitude of mysterious silence until July. 1905, when a Government notification suddenly announced that the Secretary of State had sanctioned the partition with effect from the 16th October, 1905 and that the new Province was also to include the six districts of Northern Bengal. The people of Bengal would not, however, yield and took courage from despair."\*

\*Source : A.C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, (G.A. Natesan, and Co. Madras, 1915) pp. 220-223.

## Ambikacharan Mozumdar on the Annulment of the Partition of Bengal at the 26th Indian National Congress

“Gentlemen, on this day of universal rejoicing when every heart in India in general and Bengal in particular is beating in unison with reverence and devotion to the ‘British Throne and overflowing with revived confidence and gratitude towards British statesmanship, I will not—I dare not—recount the painful records and recall the bitter memories of the past 5 years. Let the dead past bury its dead. Let suspicion and distrust, malice and rancour, rage and repression—those evil-spirits that revel in darkness—vanish from the land, and let cavil and calumny be hushed into silence. Groping our way through the darkness of defeat and despair, we have by the grace of God at last emerged into the breaking sunshine of success. Gentlemen, some of us never faltered—no,, not even in the darkest days of our trials and tribulations—in our hope, our conviction and in our faith in the ultimate triumph and vindication of British justice. In that hope we have lived, in that conviction we have worked and in that faith we have patiently suffered and waited. We had read English history in vain, if we had failed to grasp the one great lesson it teaches, that though British statesmanship has blundered in many places

it has ultimately failed} no-where. British conscience, however much darkened at times by other considerations, has invariably vindicated itself by rebelling at the end against proved tyranny, injustice and oppression to suffering humanity. The nation of Howard and Wilberforce, of Edmund Burke and Ewart Gladstone, of Henry Fawcett and John Bright, of Bentinck, Canning and Ripon, cannot perpetrate a wrong, and if it ever does, it will that day cease to be the greatest nation that it is on 'the surface of the earth.'”\*

\*Source : Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, (Delhi, 1974), pp. 533-534.

## Dadabhai Naoroji on the Partition of Bengal and Swadeshi Movement

“.....I should like to say a few words upon some topics connected with the second part of the Congress—Bengal Partition and *Swadeshi* movement.

In the Bengal Partition, the Bengalee have a just and great grievance. It is a bad blunder for England. I do not despair but that this blunder, I hope, may yet be rectified. This subject is being so well threshed out by the Bengalees themselves that I need not say anything more about it. But in connection with it we hear a great deal about agitators and agitation. Agitation is the life and soul of the whole political, social and industrial history of England. It is by agitation the English have accomplished their most glorious achievements, their prosperity, their liberties, and in short their first place among the Nations of the World.

The whole life of England, every day, is all agitation. You do not open your paper in the morning but read from beginning to end it is all agitation—Congress and Conferences—Meetings and Resolutions—without end, for a thousand and one movements, local and national. From the Prime Minister to the humblest politician his occupation is agitation for everything he wants to accomplish. The whole Parliament, Press

and Platform, is simply all agitation. Agitation is the civilized peaceful weapon of moral force, and infinitely preferable to brute physical force when possible. The subject is very tempting. But I shall not say more than the Indian journalists are mere Matriculators while the Anglo-Indian journalists are Masters of Arts in the University of British Agitators. The former are only the pupils of the latter, and the Anglo Indian journalists ought to feel proud that their pupils are doing credit to them. Perhaps a few words from an English statesman will be more sedative and satisfactory.

Macaulay has said in one of his speeches :

"I hold that we have owed to agitation a long series of beneficent reforms which would have been effected in no other way...the truth is that agitation is inseparable from popular government...Would the slave trade ever have been abolished without agitation ? Would slavery ever have been abolished without agitation ?"

For every movement in England—local and national—the cheap weapons are agitation by meetings, demonstrations and petitions to Parliament. These petitions are not any begging for any favours any more than that the conventional "Your obedient servant" in letters makes a man an obedient servant. It is the conventional way of approaching higher authorities. The petitions are claims for rights or for justice or for reforms,—to influence and put pressure on Parliament by showing how the public regard any particular matter. The fact that we have more or less failed hitherto, is because we have petitioned too much but that we have petitioned too little. One of the factors that carries weight in Parliament is the evidence that the people interested in any question are really in earnest. Only the other day Mr. Asquith urged as one of his reasons against women's franchise that he did not see sufficient evidence to show that the majority of the women themselves were earnest to acquire the franchise. We have not petitioned or agitated at all in our demands. In every important matter we must petition Parliament with hundreds and thousands of petitions—with

hundreds of thousands of signatures from all parts of India. Taking one present instance in England, the Church party has held till the beginning of October 1,400 meetings known, and against the Education Bill, and petitioned with three-quarters of a million signatures and many demonstrations. Since then they have been possibly more and more active. Agitate, agitate over the whole length and breadth of India in every nook and corner—peacefully, of course—if we really mean to get justice from John Bull. Satisfy him that we are in earnest. The Bengalis, I am glad, have learned the lesson and have led the march. All India must learn the lesson—of sacrifice of money and of earnest personal work.

Agitate, to agitate means inform the Indian people what their rights are and why and how they should obtain them, and inform the British people of the rights of the Indian people and why they should grant them. If we do not speak, they say we are satisfied. If we speak, we become agitators. The Indian people are properly asked to act constitutionally while the government remains unconstitutional and despotic.

Next about the “settled fact”. Every Bill defeated in Parliament is a “settled fact”. Is it not? And the next year it makes its appearance again. The Education Act of 1902 was a settled fact. An Act of Parliament, was it not? And now within a short time what a turmoil is it in! And what an agitation and excitement has been going on about it and is still in prospect. It may lead to a clash between the two Houses of Parliament. There is nothing as an eternal “settled fact”. Times change, circumstances are misunderstood or change, better light and understanding, or new forces come into play, and what is settled to-day may become obsolete to-morrow.

The organizations which I suggest, and which I may call a band of political missionaries in all the Provinces, will serve many purposes at once—to inform the people of their rights, as British citizens, to prepare them to claim those rights by petitions, and when the rights are obtained as sooner or latter they must be obtained, to exercise and enjoy them.

“Swadeshi” is not a thing of to-day. It has existed in Bombay as far as I know for many years past. I am a free-trader, I am a Member, and in the Executive Committee of the Cobden Club for 20 years, and yet I say that “Swadeshi” is a forced necessity for India in its unnatural economic muddle. As long as the economic condition remains unnatural and impoverishing, by the necessity of supplying every year some Rs. 200,000,000 for the salary, pensions, &c. of the children of a foreign country at the expense and impoverishment of the children of India, to talk of applying economic laws to the condition of India is adding insult to injury. I have said so much about this over and over again that I would not say more about it here—I refer to my book. I ask any Englishman whether Englishmen would submit to this unnatural economic muddle of India for a single day in England, leave alone 150 years? No, never. No, Ladies and Gentlemen, England will never submit to it. It is, what I have already quoted in Mr. Morley’s words, it is “the meddling wrongly with economic things that is going to the very life, to the very heart, to the very core of our national existence.” (*Vide Appendix B*).”\*

\*Source : Sankar Ghose, *Congress Presidential Speeches*, (Delhi, 1972) pp. 70-72.

## Henry W. Nevinson on the Partition of Bengal—His Meeting with Nawab Salimulla

“I was in haste, because I had an appointment with the Nawab Salimulla of Dacca, certainly the most influential in the city, and perhaps in the province. For the population of Eastern Bengal, though nearly all Bengali, is about three-fifths Mohammedans, and, owing to his father’s wealth, wisdom and public munificence, the Nawab is regarded by the Mohammedans as their natural leader...when the partition was first suggested, he was as much opposed to it as any Bengali could be, and I was told that, in his simple hearted way, he described it as ‘beastly’.”\*

\**Source* : Henry W. Nevinson, *The New Spirit in India*, (London, 1908)  
pp. 190-191.

## B. C. Pal on the Bengal Partition Agitation

“We are sorry,—though in truth we are not at all surprised—at the way this present agitation against the decision of the authorities to break up the administrative unity of Bengal is being conducted by some of our leaders. There is not an intelligent man in the country who believes really that prayers and petitions to either to the Viceroy, or the Secretary of State for India, or the British Parliament will ever bring about a reconsideration and reversal of this decision. All that could be said against it have been said over and over again during the last year and a half that this proposal has been before the country. The strength of public feeling against it has been repeatedly proved by monster meetings held in every mufassil town and in the metropolis. We had our last word at the crowded conference that was held in January with Sir Henry Cotton as President. If the Government saw there was any strength in our arguments or in our movement they would never have shown such utter disregard of both as they have done by their final decision in this matter. Why then pray to them again for a reconsideration of the scheme? A consideration can be demanded, justly, upon new grounds, or upon new developments. The addition of Rajshahi is no new ground at all. The people of Rajshahi cannot conceivably bring forward

any arguments against their transference to East Bengal which do not apply to and which have not been repeatedly urged by Dacca or Chittagong. How then can we urge that this fresh addition to the proposed province changes the problem in any way so as to justify a reconsideration of it ? The proposal has been before the whole country. The whole country with one voice have protested against it, and have prayed that the mischief may be stayed. The protest has been in vain. That prayer has not been given any heed to. Why then go up to the same Government again with these futile protests, and these foolish feminine prayers ?

Maharaja Jatindramohan Tagore and the other leaders of the land-holding class have wired their prayers to the Secretary of State for a reconsideration of the proposal. They joined the old protests also publicly. If Sir Jatindramohan did not personally attend the Calcutta demonstration of last year, his son and heir did, and it is well-known that the British Indian Association took an active part in the organisation of it. And if the joint protests of the people and the Zemindars had no effect on the Government, how can we expect that these individual protests will have any influence with them ? These noble men will excuse us for saying that they would have shown greater consideration for their own rank and position if they had refused to go up to the Government with any fresh prayers in regard to this matter. This is what their own sense of self-respect must have itself dictated to them.

Or, if they did send any further protest, it ought have to taken a bolder, a clearer,—a positively self-asserting tone than their telegraphic representations have evidently done. If they could send an ultimatum to Mr. Brodrick or to Lord Curzon, definitely declaring that if this Partition were carried out, they would refuse to participate in any public official functions, or to do anything which by law they were not positively compelled to do, to help the course of administration or legislation in the country, it would have brought the whole Government down on their knees. Such an ultimatum is the only thing we can now send up to Government. A telegram to the King of

England that Maharaja Jatindramohan Tagore and the other titled nobility of the province, refusing to receive the Prince and Princess of Wales unless this Partition scheme was absolutely abandoned, would have sent a thrill to the whole of the British Empire, and laid the foundations of our future civic autonomy at once. It would have proclaimed the birth of the new Bengalee Nation to all the world, and would have struck terror into the heart of the alien Bureaucracy that rule the country now. But what will these cringing feminine prayers, or all this foolish and false agitation do, except proving our want of worth before those who are at present the masters of our political destiny.

In this view, we wish Maharaja Jatindramohan and others had not sent any prayers to Government at all. In the same view we regret the way that the present agitation is being conducted. We must agitate, no doubt; but the objective of all our agitations should be to awaken the patriotic spirit of the nation, and not knock at the door of the Government. There should be one single resolution at all our public meetings against this proposal now,—a resolution condemning it in unequivocal terms, and calling upon the people to resolve to counteract the evils that it seeks to work in the country. There should absolutely be no more petitions either to the Government here or the Indian Secretary in London. They have ignored us. Why can't we, so far as it lies in our power, ignore them also? We may fail in this, we admit. It is much easier to petition and pray than to work and build. But the latter is the manlier thing to do, and even our failures here will not be absolutely fruitless. Even these failures will train us, however feebly, in those mental and moral qualities which constitute really the inner life and strength of every nation; and from these failures the future generations will be able to draw much higher strength and inspiration than what they are ever likely to do from even a most successful campaign of prayers and petitions.”\*

\*Source : Bipichandra, Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj* (The Rise of New Patriotism) Calcutta-6, Yugayatri Prakashak Limited. 1954 pp. 44-47.

## B. C. Pal on the New Movement

"What is this New Movement ? You read in the newspapers the outer manifestations of this movement. You have come to identify this movement with Swadeshi; you have come to identify this movement with something more than Lord Minto's "honest" Swadeshi; you have come to identify it with Swadeshi that is organically related to boycott; (Hear, hear) you have come to identify this movement with the new ideal of *Swaraj*; you have come to identify this movement also, as your chairman told you, with the Partition of Bengal (Hear, hear). You see ripples of this movement in the outbreak of lawlessness in the Eastern Provinces; first, in the outbreak of lawlessness by those who are paid by the people of this country (Hear, hear and cries of shame) to help in the preservation of law and order. (Cries of shame). You saw the ripple of this new movement in the kind of lawlessness last year about this time in Barisal. (Cries of shame). You, I believe, recognised also the outer ripples of this movement in the present outburst of lawlessness in another shape, viz, in the outburst of Mahomedan vandalism in parts of East Bengal. You have come to identify this movement with the incarceration of your youngmen and oldmen also, with the arrests of popular leaders (cries of shame) in different parts of Bengal. You have come

to identify it with the regulation sticks of the police and the *Vande Mataram* sticks of the people. I know all this; and you also know all these things. But I do not care just now to speak of those outer ripples. They are merely the manifestations of a force that is flowing through the very heart of the nation. They are the outermost fringe, as it were, the outermost course of the mighty currents that have commenced to stir to their very depths the still waters of Indian national life. Sometime ago an English gentleman, a retired Anglo-Indian official, wrote to a friend of mine in Calcutta, wanting to know the inwardness of the New Movement in Bengal. I desire to speak a few words to you this evening on this inwardness of the New Movement.”\*

\*Source : B.C. Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, pp. 118-119.

## B. C. Pal on the Bengal Partition

“What is this movement due to ? What are the forces of its strength and inspiration ? What are the forces that lie hidden at the root of this movement ? What is it that this movement desires to achieve and how does it propose to achieve that end ? Reference, gentlemen, has been made to the Partition of Bengal. Allow me to tell you that the significance of that measure has been considerably exaggerated outside Bengal. It has been, I confess, exaggerated also to some extent even by a section of the Bengali press. The Partition was an evil measure, the Partition was a hateful measure. The Bengalees hated to be divided from their own people, the Eastern Province from the Western Province. We have been living together for—how many centuries past nobody knows; we have developed a peculiar culture of our own through a common language and a common literature. Belonging though, no doubt to the wide life of Indian Hindus and Indian Moslems, yet Bengal Hinduism has its own peculiarity, as the Moslem ideal and culture of Bengal have also their own peculiarity. Bengal has been for many centuries past a nation speaking one language, belonging to one civilization, practically trying to develop one culture, and this original unity based upon the unity of language, religion, civilization and culture, developed

and grew—thank God—under the community of civic and political interests. Ever since the establishment of British rule in India, we had been governed practically by one and the same laws, ruled by the same administration; and our political life has, all these years, been controlled by one single policy. Suddenly, however, the Province, united in language, united in past historic associations, united in civilization and culture, united in a common law and administration, this Province was proposed to be cut into two, which gave offence to us. It pained us. We cried, we prayed, we petitioned, we protested, but all to no purpose (cries of shame) and the administrative will—I will not call it administrative necessity because we do not recognise the necessity—the administrative will had its way. And on the 16th October, 1905, two Provinces were made out of the Province of Bengal. The measure was carried out with almost indecent haste, and the reason of the haste was this—Judging from the past experience of Indian political life and agitation, the Government of Lord Curzon evidently believed, that, as long as the measure was not carried out, so long only would this agitation continue. But once it became a “settled fact”, the agitation also would quietly, like all previous agitations, more or less settle down. That was the prognosis which the acute Viceroy made of the situation. For once, superior wisdom was blinded, superior intelligence failed to see through the outer garb and gathering of popular agitation and popular excitement, and the agitation against Partition instead of subsiding, as previous agitations had done, when it was found that they would do no good, continued; it increased, it expended; it attacked and covered new grounds. It developed new forces and it applied these new forces to the solution of the problem before itself. (Hear, hear).”\*

\* *Source : Swadeshi and Swaraj*, pp. 119-120.

## B. C. Pal on the Agitation Against Partition of Bengal

"Whence came this new inspiration, this is new force ? Truth to say, we soon recognised that it is not in the power of the Government, much less is it in the power of an alien Government, to divide a people whom God has united. (Hear, hear, hear.) They might with their pen, dipped in red ink, pass a line on the administrative map of the Province, (Hear, hear) add fresh labours to the draftsmen in the Survey Department of the Government. But the stroke of the pen cannot cut the nation into two. The stroke of the pen, though it wounds, wounds in other ways than by cutting things into two's and three's, twenty's and thirty's. If it were possible for a stroke of the pen to cut up anything, why we have been applying this stroke, my friend in the chair and I, a humble follower of his. (Cheers.) We have been cutting administrations not into two, but into two hundreds almost every day by the stroke of our pens; but the administration remains all the same. We pierce officials by this instrument, but the officials remain all the time hale and hearty. So that when Lord Curzon passed his gubernatorial pen, cut the Province of Bengal in twain, Bengal remained one, all that this attempt did was to create a deathless determination in the people to continue to be one to the end of their life. (Hear, hear.) So, really, the

Partition measure failed, and the failure of it was confirmed by the proceedings of the public meeting that we held in Calcutta on the 7th August, 1905. I was addressing an overflow meeting on that memorable evening from the steps of the Calcutta Town Hall. The audience was as large as this, and when I saw that audience the idea struck me that it would be a very good thing if the Viceroy's astral body could descend from Simla and take its position on the top of the banyan tree that we have near our Town Hall, and if it could see from the top of that tree the crowds that had gathered, and declared their determination to undo the Partition measure. If he could have seen it, he might have known and understood from ocular evidence how Bengal was being partitioned by him. No, gentlemen, the partition has failed. Mr. Morley says, it is a 'settled fact'. History declares that it is a settled failure (cheers), and I think settled failure is as good an expression as "settled fact". (Hear, hear.) Now, the Partition has failed, and we do not care whether the Partition goes or whether it remains.

### THE NEW MOVEMENT & CURZON

Why, because in our eagerness to undo this Partition, in the agony of our heart, as our protest, our prayers, our petitions failed to move the obdurate hearts of those who are placed over us to govern us and to rule us, in the agony of despair we looked about and found nothing on which we could lean. All was dark; our faith in all the professions had already commenced to wane long before the Partition measure had been broached. Our faith in the generosity and justice of British policy had commenced to wane before the Partition measure had commenced. Lord Curzon—God bless him (cheers and laughter)—I say it sincerely, God bless him (renewed laughter), because, to my mind, Sir, India has not had a more beneficent Viceroy than Lord Curzon. (Hear, hear.) Lord Ripon was kind. Lord Ripon (cheers) was considerate. Lord Ripon was good. He was tender-hearted. But Lord Ripon's rule was not so beneficent to India as Lord Curzon's has been. Lord Ripon was like a kind mother, and there are

circumstances in the life of a child when a kind mother becomes a bad mother, when a kind mother works more mischief than a hating step-mother might have done. Lord Ripon was a kind Viceory, but Lord Curzon was a beneficent Viceroy. But whether he wished it or not, that is another question. That is not a question that needs trouble you. Let the English people judge it. Let them consider in the light of their own interest the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. But applying our standard of judgment to that viceroyalty, I do not hesitate to say that it has been one of the most beneficent, if not decidedly the most beneficent, viceroyalties that India ever had. We had been brought up, Sir, for too long a period, upon political lollipops. We had been given for too long a period the beautiful and charming baby-comforter to keep ourselves quiet. Lord Ripon had done it. Others would do it again. But God be thanked, Lord Curzon threw the baby-comforter away, and by throwing it away he made us feel the hunger that is in us, the hunger for *Swaraj* (Hear, hear), the hunger for political autonomy, the hunger for occupying our definitely appointed place in the council of nations (Hear, hear) the hunger for entering upon our own rights in the universal life of humanity, with a view to deepen, to broaden, to quicken that life by the provisions of our special culture, civilization and ideals. (Hear, hear.) This is the work that God has done, and chose, in the mysteriousness of His Providence, Lord Curzon as the main instrument for doing this work. Let us thank God for Lord Curzon's viceroyalty, .....”\*

\*Source : B.C. Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, pp. 121-123.

## Presidential Address of Syed Nabiullah, Muslim League Session 1910

"Therefore, the wave of unrest which first swept over Bengal after its partition and then, with diminishing force, over the rest of India, followed by the ebullitions of frenzy which broke out in different parts of the country, opened men's eyes to the significant signs of the times, to the serious gravity of the situation, and the militant forces at work. It is not necessary to describe in detail the startling events which followed each other in bewildering succession. Suffice it to say that by great good fortune we had at this critical juncture a soldier-statesman at the head of affairs in this country, and a philosopher-statesman at the helm in England, between whom there was perfect unanimity of sentiment, and who correctly diagnosed the situation. When it became apparent that an enlargement of the Legislative Councils and of their functions, together with other constitutional organic changes, was contemplated by Government, it was felt by some of the leading men in our community that the time had arrived for the Mohammedans to come out into the open, and to claim what was rightfully their due in view of their importance and historical traditions; that they could no longer afford to sulk in their tents, waiting on providence with folded hands and brooding

over their departed greatness—unless they wanted to be left out in the cold. This, in brief, led to the formation of the All-India Muslim League in the closing days of 1906; though before that there had been several spasmodic attempts at forming a political association of Mohammedans to safeguard their interests. We have now, for better or worse, taken the plunge; and whether we swim, float, or sink : it all depends upon ourselves. I can only express the hope that the newborn enthusiasm of my co-religionists will not evaporate, as of yore, with the lapse of time, and that our young men will devote themselves more and more to the study of financial, industrial and economic questions rather than to politics, pure and simple.”\*

## Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque at the Muslim League Session, Dacca 1906

"I cannot help recalling the pleasure which I experienced when, in reply to the Address of the Musalmans' deputation to the Viceroy, of which I had the honour to be a member, His Excellency said that Musalmans of Eastern Bengal had behaved with remarkable moderation and courtesy under the most trying circumstances, and I have to congratulate the Hon'ble Nawab Salim-ul-lah Bahadur of Dacca and the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury on a result so eminently successful, which was brought about by their own efforts and the great influence they wield in Eastern Bengal : and we can all rely that this influence will be used in the future, as it has been in the past, on the side of moderation, law, justice and courtesy."\*

\*Source : A.M. Zaidi, From Syed to the Emergence of Jinnah, p. 82.

## Indian National Congress Resolution No. IX, Madras, 1903

“That this Congress views with deep concern the present policy of the Government of India in breaking up territorial divisions which have been of long standing and are closely united by ethnological, legislative, social and administrative relations and deprecates the separation from Bengal to Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong Division and portions of Chota Nagpur Division and also the separation of the District of Ganjam and the agency tracts of the Ganjam and Visagapatam Districts from the Madras Presidency.”\*

\*Source : Proceedings of the 19th Indian National Congress, (Madras, 1903), p. 128.

**Indian National Congress, Resolution  
No. XIV, Bombay, 1904**

“That this Congress records its emphatic protest against the proposal, of the Government of India, for the Partition of Bengal in any manner whatsoever, that the proposals are viewed with great alarm by the people as the division of the Bengali nation into separate units will seriously interfere with its social, intellectual and material progress, involving the loss of various constitutional, and other rights and privileges which the Province, has so long enjoyed and will burden the country with heavy expenditure which the Indian taxpayer cannot at all afford.”

“The Congress is of opinion that no case has been made out for the Partition of Bengal, but if the present constitution of the Bengal Government is considered inadequate for the efficient administration of the Province, the remedy lies not in any redistribution of its territories, but in organic changes in the form of the Government, such as the conversion of the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal into Governorship with an Executive Council like that of Bombay and Madras.”\*

\*Source: Proceedings of 20th Indian National Congress, (Bombay, 1904),  
p. xxxiv.

## Indian National Congress, Resolution No. XII, Banaras, 1905

“That this Congress records its emphatic protest against the Partition of Bengal in the face of the strongest opposition on the part of the people of the province.

That having regard to the intense dissatisfaction felt by the entire Bengali Community at the dismemberment of their province and their manifest disinclination to accept the partition as an accomplished fact, this Congress appeals to the Government of India and the Secretary of State to reverse or modify the arrangements made, in such a manner as to conciliate public opinion and allay the excitement and unrest present among all classes of the people.

That this Congress recommends the adoption of some arrangement which would be consistent with administrative efficiency and would place the entire Bengali community under one undivided administration.”\*

\*Source : Full Text of All the Presidential Addresses, Reprint of All Congress Resolutions etc. (Madras, nd) p. 157.

Indian National Congress,  
Resolution No. XII, Banaras, 1905

“That this Congress records its earnest and emphatic protest against the repressive measures which have been adopted by the authorities in Bengal after the people there had been compelled to resort to the boycott of foreign goods as a last protest and perhaps the only constitutional and effective means left to them of drawing the attention of the British public to the action of the Government of India in persisting in their determination to partition Bengal in utter disregard of the universal prayers and protest of the people.”\*

\*Source : Full Text of All the Presidential Addresses, Reprint of All Congress Resolutions etc., p. 158.

**Indian National Congress,  
Resolution No. VI, Bhowanipur, 1906**

“That this Congress again records its emphatic protest against the Partition of Bengal, and regrets that the present Government, while admitting that there were errors in the original plan, and that it went wholly and decisively against the wishes of the majority of the people of Bengal, is disposed to look upon it as a settled fact, in spite of the earnest and persistent protest of the people, and their manifest disinclination to accept it as final;

That this Congress, composed of representatives from all the provinces of this country, desires earnestly to impress upon the British Parliament and the present Liberal Government that it will be not only just, but expedient, to reverse or modify the partition in such a manner as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one undivided administration, and thus restore contentment to so important a province as Bengal.”\*

\**Source* : Full text of All Presidential Addresses, Reprint of All Congress Resolutions etc. p. 164.

Indian National Congress,  
Resolution No. V, Nagpur, 1907

“That this Congress earnestly appeals to the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India to reverse the Partition of Bengal, or to modify it in such a manner as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one and the same administration.

That this Congress is of opinion that the rectification of this admitted error will restore contentment to the Province of Bengal, give satisfaction to the other provinces and instead of impairing, will enhance the prestige of His Majesty’s Government throughout the country.”\*

\*Source : Proceedings of the 23rd Indian National Congress, (Nagpur 1907), p. 3.

## Indian National Congress, Resolution No. V, Madras, 1908

“This Congress earnestly appeals to the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India to reverse the Partition of Bengal or to modify it in such a manner as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one and the same administration.

This Congress is of opinion that the rectification of this admitted error will restore contentment to the Province of Bengal, give satisfaction to the other Provinces and instead of impairing, will enhance the prestige of His Majesty’s Government throughout the Country.”\*

\*Source : Jagdish S. Sharma, India’s Struggle for Freedom, vol. I, (Delhi, 1962), p. 68.

## Indian National Congress, Resolution No. X, Madras, 1908

“Having regard to the recent deportations and the grave risk of injustice involved in Government action based upon *ex parte* and untested information and having regard to the penal laws of country, this Congress strongly urges upon the Government the repeal of the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 and similar Regulations in other Provinces of India; and it respectfully prays that the persons recently deported in Bengal be given an opportunity of exculpating themselves or for meeting any charges that may be against them, or be set at liberty.”\*

\*Source : J.S. Sharma India's Struggle for Freedom, vol. I, p. 69.

**Indian National Congress,  
Resolution No. VIII, Lahore, 1909**

“That this Congress earnestly appeals to the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India, not to treat the question of the Partition of Bengal as incapable of reconsideration, but to take the earliest opportunity so to modify the said Partition as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one and the same administration.

That this Congress humbly submits that the rectification of this admitted error will be an act of far-sighted statesmanship. It will restore contentment to the Province of Bengal, give satisfaction to other Provinces, and enhance the prestige of His Majesty’s Government throughout the country.

That this Congress appoints Messrs. Surendranath Bannerji and Bhupendranath Bose to proceed to England as a deputation to lay the question of the Partition before the authorities and public there.”\*

\**Source* : Proceedings of the 24th Indian National Congress (Lahore, 1909), p. 81.

**Indian National Congress,  
Resolution No. X, Allahabad, 1910**

“That (a) this Congress earnestly appeals to the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India not to treat the question of the Partition of Bengal as incapable of reconsideration, but to take the earliest opportunity so to modify the said Partition, as to keep the entire Bengali-speaking community under one and the same administration;

(b) this Congress humbly submits that the rectification of this admitted error will be an act of far-sighted statesmanship. It will restore contentment to the Province of Bengal, give satisfaction to other Provinces, and enhance the prestige of His Majesty’s Government throughout the country.”\*

\**Source : Proceedings of the 25th Indian National Congress, (Allahabad, 1910), p. 63.*

## Indian National Congress, Resolution No. II, Calcutta, 1911

"That this Congress respectfully begs leave to tender to His Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor an humble expression of its profound gratitude for his gracious announcement modifying the Partition of Bengal. The Congress also places on record its sense of gratitude to the Government of India for recommending the modification, and to the Secretary of State for sanctioning it. In the opinion of this Congress, this administrative measure will have a far-reaching effect in helping forward the policy of conciliation with which the honoured names of Lord Hardinge and Lord Crewe will for ever be associated in the public mind."\*

\**Source : J.S. Sharma, India's Struggle for Freedom, Vol. I, pp. 69-70.*

**Indian National Congress,  
Resolution No. III, Calcutta, 1911**

“That this Congress desires to place on record its sense of profound gratitude to His Majesty the King-Emperor for the creation of a separate Province of Bihar and Orissa under a Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and prays that in re-adjusting the Provincial boundaries the Government will be pleased to place all the Bengali speaking districts under one and the same administration.”\*

\**Source : J.S., Sharma, India's Struggle for Freedom, Vol. I, p. 70.*

## All India Muslim League, Resolution No. IV, 1906

“Resolved that this meeting, in view of the clear interest of the Musalmans of Eastern Bengal, considers that the Partition is sure to prove beneficial to the Mohammedan community which constitutes the vast majority of that Province, and that all such methods of agitation as boycotting should be strongly condemned and discouraged.”\*

\*Source : *Green Book No. I*, by Mohamed Ali, Printed at the Indian Daily Telegraph Press, Lucknow, 1907. Also A.M. Zaidi vol. I, p. 91.

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"The All-India Muslim League expresses on behalf of the Indian Musalmans its great abhorrence of the anarchist movement manifesting itself in some parts of India, emphatically condemns the dastardly outrages recently committed at Ahmedabad, Nasik and Calcutta, and appeals to all patriotic citizens to actively co-operate with the authorities in up-rooting the evil from the soil of India."\*

\**Source : A.M. Zaidi, Vol. I, p. 227.*

## All India Muslim League Resolution on the Annulment of the Partition of Bengal

“The All-India Muslim League places on record its deep sense of regret and disappointment at the annulment of the partition of Bengal in utter disregard of Muslim feeling, and trusts that Government will take early steps to safeguard Muslim interests in the Presidency of Bengal.”\*

\**Source : A.M. Zaidi, Vol. I, p. 393.*

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